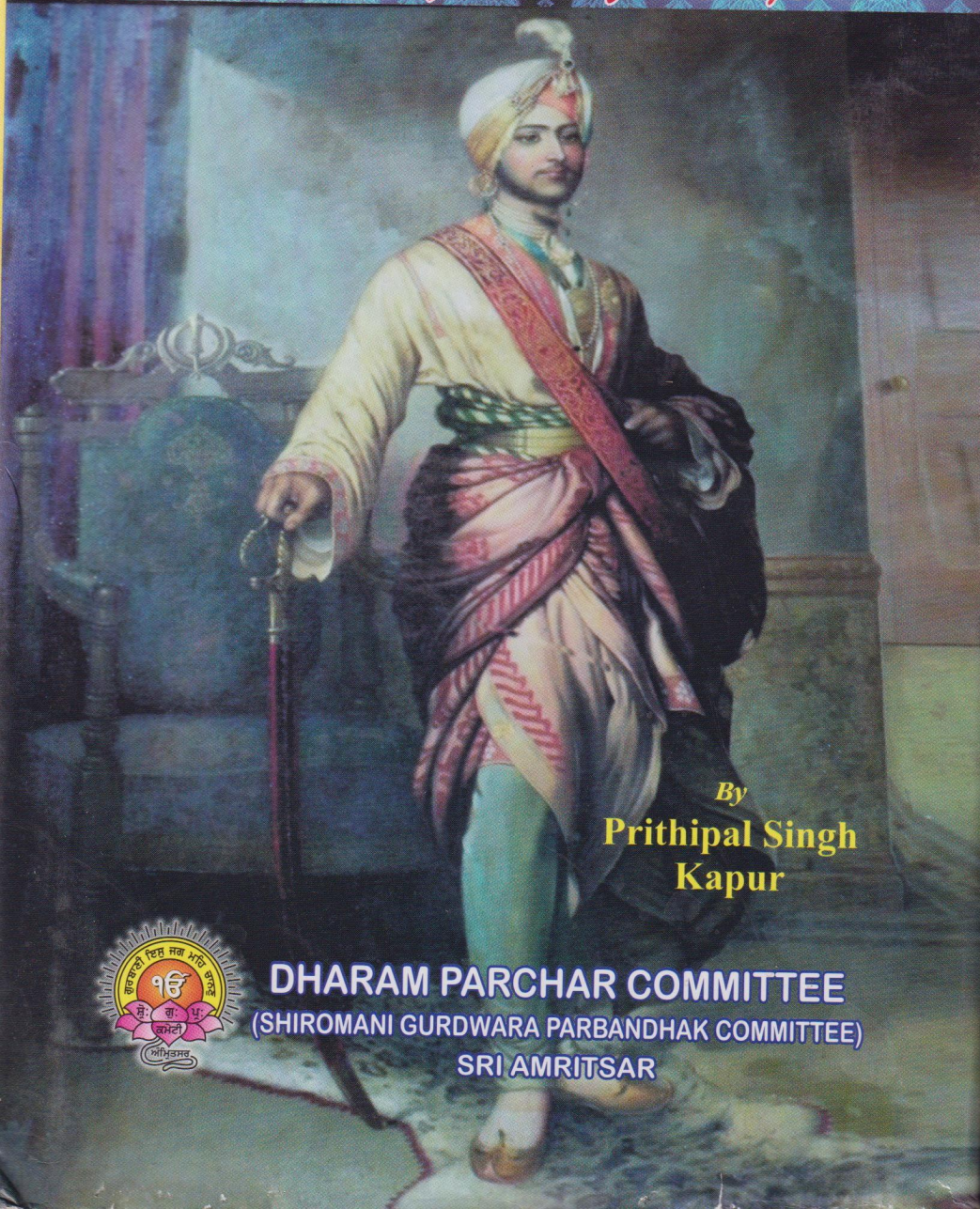


# *Maharaja* **Duleep Singh**

*The Last Sovereign Ruler of the Punjab*



By  
**Prithipal Singh  
Kapur**



**DHARAM PARCHAR COMMITTEE**  
(SHIROMANI GURDWARA PARBANDHAK COMMITTEE)  
SRI AMRITSAR



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**Dharam Parchar Committee**

**Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee,  
Amritsar.**



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## **MAHARAJA DULEEP SINGH**

The Last Sovereign Ruler of the Punjab

[Seminar Papers]

*Edited by :*

**PRITHIPAL SINGH KAPUR**

(Formerly, Pro Vice Chancellor,  
Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar)

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(Late) Principal Satbir Singh*

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## FOREWORD

A peep through the events that over-took the Punjab soon after the death of Sher-i-Punjab Maharaja Ranjit Singh, is not only heart rending but agonising also. Maharani Jind Kaur and Maharaja Duleep Singh were unfortunate witnesses to what happened and also became victims of the machinations of the courtiers; collaterals and the perfidious British neighbours. The mother and the son had also to stand the vilification campaigns launched against them in order to malign them in the eyes of the *Khalsa Panth*. Still, the soldiers of the Khalsa army looked unto them as the sovereigns of the Punjab.

It has been our earnest desire since long to persuade the scholars of history to have a fresh look at the events that led to the British occupation of the Punjab. We are glad that such an occasion was provided by the first Death Centenary celebrations of Maharaja Duleep Singh. A seminar on this theme was organised by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar at the Gujranwala Guru Nanak Khalsa College, Ludhiana in December 1993. A galaxy of eminent scholars made it to the seminar and their valuable contributions comprise of this collection of Seminar Papers.

Professor Prithipal Singh Kapur (formerly Pro-Vice Chancellor, Guru Nanak Dev University) deserves our thanks for having painstakingly edited the papers and the inspiring keynote address.

We are satisfied that this seminar inspired many a scholar to join the endeavour to reconstruct Sikh history of this period.

Nov. 6, 2014

(Guru Nanak Parkash Utsav)

**Avtar Singh**

President

Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee,

Amritsar.



## EDITORIAL NOTE

Historians have not been fair to Maharaja Duleep Singh, the last sovereign ruler of the Punjab and his mother: Maharani Jind Kaur (popularly called Rani Jindan). Perhaps, they found it difficult to sift the voluminous material containing such conflicting accounts as could easily conceal the truth and present a sordid story totally opposite to the reality. The first death centenary of Maharaja Duleep Singh was considered to be a fit occasion to cast a fresh look at the tragic events that led to the fall of a Kingdom which rose as a climax to a people's war against tyranny of the later Mughals. On the initiative of Principal Satbir Singh and munificence of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, a national level seminar could be held to enable the scholars to assemble and deliberate on the events of the reign of Maharaja Duleep Singh and his life thereafter and unraval the trail of events that enabled the usurpers to dub these patriotic crusaders—the mother and the son—as rebels and unfaithful towards their country and the people.

The two-day seminar held at the Gujranwala Guru Nanak Khalsa College, Ludhiana, was inaugurated by Shri Kuldip Nayyar, (Eminent Journalist) and was attended by a host of scholars drawn from the universities as far as Calcutta. A senior veteran historian of national repute like Dr. V.N. Dutta also honoured us with his presence. We are glad that the papers presented and the discussions that followed shed new light on the life of Maharaja Duleep Singh who after becoming aware of his glorious heritage, lived and suffered to uphold the pride of his people and the noble values that Sikhism stands for. Maharani Jindan and Thakur Singh Sandhanwalia who dinned the stories

of the glory of the Khalsa and Maharaja Ranjit Singh as also the Guru's word (*Gurbani*) into the ears of Duleep Singh and inspired him to glory in the name of the faith to which his forefathers belonged. To my mind, Maharani Jindan was to Duleep Singh what Queen Augusta was to George III. All this made Duleep Singh a relentless crusader against British imperialism and in the process, Duleep Singh internationalised the issue of Indian independence which later on, leaders like Jawahar Lal Nehru and Subhash Chandra Bose cashed in. The seminarians were able to put into focus the need to deconstruct the version hitherto projected concerning the events of this period. A hospitable ground has been prepared for further in-depth study.

The papers have been edited in the light of illuminating discussions that followed each presentation. We have also included two papers (Appendix one and two) by eminent literati; Mulakh Raj Anand and Sardar K.S. Duggal presented in a panel discussion organised by Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan at the India International Centre, New Delhi. I am thankful to my student-friend, Dr. Mohinder Singh, Director, National Institute of Punjab Studies of the Sadan, for permission to include these papers. Appendix three carries a scholarly paper by Raj Kumar Sharma of Govt. College, Gurdaspur, included for the sake of wider circulation.

I am sure this collection of papers will provide stimulus to the scholars for an in depth study of the circumstances under which Maharaja Duleep Singh had to fight the might of the British imperialism at its genith in order to defend the last sovereign state of the Indian sub-continent.

I shall like to place on record my special thanks to Sardar Manjit Singh Calcutta; the then Secretary S.G.P.C. for the keen interest evinced by him in the seminar as also the publication of this volume.



*Key Note Address*

## MAHARAJA DULEEP SINGH AND HIS TIMES

*Prithipal Singh Kapur*

We are meeting in the dusk of the year 1993 to peep through the misty events that enveloped the life and time of the last sovereign of the Punjab, Maharaja Duleep Singh. Sohan Lal, the court diarist of Ranjit Singh records that Duleep Singh was born under the influence of ill-omened stars as indicated by the court astrologer, Madhu Sudan. But none could perceive at that time that Duleep Singh was destined to sign away the kingdom; his father had so assiduously brought into being. The events that preceded and followed the accession of Maharaja Duleep Singh are to be analysed in the light of an accepted historical truth that none of the events finding a place in the narrative of history stands isolated from its past and future.

The Sikh Panth as it shaped under the Gurus and struggled hard for survival during the eighteenth century, mostly comprised of the peasantry and the lower middle class gentry inhabiting the towns notwithstanding the fact that the Gurus drew adherents from all sections of the people. The first among them who sought to assume sovereignty in the name of the Gurus and the Khalsa was Banda Singh Bahadur. Blessed by the tenth Guru himself, he did not find time to establish a regular form of government. The only measures that he could think of were: striking coin in the name of the Gurus to whom he ascribed his success and glory and giving much needed relief to the peasants and the artisans by lightening their tax burden. His major reform was abolition of

the appressive Mughal *Zamindari*. He believed in the dictum 'land to the tiller'. The Sikh Sardars who followed Banda succeeded in destroying the power of local Muslim and other chiefs with a view to abolish *Mansabdari* and occupation of territories by guaranteeing full security of life and prosperity to the people by levying a single tax called *Rakhi* (protection cess). When Ranjit Singh came to power; he found the Mughal system of Govt. completely uprooted and some rudimentary arrangements in vogue that had yet to take shape to suit the emerging power structure. Although most of the stalwarts of the Dal Khalsa had passed into history, the body of voluntary fighting Sikh soldiers and their zeal for bringing glory to the name of the Khalsa remained intact. Under these circumstances Ranjit Singh had to search for a system that would look closer to the ideals of the Khalsa for which it had struggled and could also facilitate his complete control and supremacy in the kingdom. Consequently, Ranjit Singh did not wear emblems of royalty in his turban, struck coins only in the name of the Gurus, Nanak Shahi and Gobind Shahi, the Govt. was named *Sarkar-i- Khalsa* and the court got the name, *Darbar-i-Khalsa*. For the Sikhs; Ranjit Singh embodied the spirit and glory of the Khalsa but still remained their comrade. The adventurous from among the other communities who flocked to Ranjit Singh for favours, looked unto him as their sole benefactor and an absolute monarch like the Mughal king. Their loyalty remained personal to him and they never looked beyond the fulfilment of their own ambitions and pursuit of pelf and power. The suave *Faqir* brothers truly presented themselves as remanants of the Mughal nobility (incidentally Aziz-ud-Din had come to Lahore from Bokhara and for some time used 'Bokhari' after his name). The Dogra brothers from Jammu joined Ranjit Singh as soldiers of fortune. The Punjabi Hindus both Khattris and Brahmins came forward to advance not only their own interests but also of the Hindu community to which they



belonged (this explains their affinity with the Dogras and the Poorbeas in the earlier period). The vanquished Punjabi Muslim chiefs of Kasur, Multan and Derajat; perhaps never reconciled to the Sikh rule and opted to settle quietly on their *Jagirs*. A Brahmin of petty origin from Meerut, Khushal Singh also sneaked into the court of Ranjit Singh. 'The only Sikh Sardar with genuine Sikh feelings, was Hari Singh Nalwa.\* The Sandhawalia trio Attar Singh, Lehna Singh and Ajit Singh always remained on the lookout to emerge as arbiters of power in the court by virtue of their kinship with the ruling dynasty. From among such stock of people, Ranjit Singh found cohorts to wield power that came his way. Ranjit Singh seems to have been conscious of the fact that the Punjabis had been through anarchy for longer than enough. Therefore, his government must look to the welfare of the people. But he was not fortunate like Sher Shah Suri and Akbar to find a Todar Mal on hand. The Dogra brothers from Jammu, Gulab Singh, Dhyan Singh and Suchet Singh did have the skill and the qualities required for the management of the affairs of the state. That is why they succeeded in establishing their hegemony in the Sikh court during last years of Ranjit Singh's rule. But they were more given to greed, avarice and intrigue and were little inclined to inculcate the traits of loyalty to the salt and patriotism.

We find many things in common in the post-Sher Shah Suri and post-Ranjit Singh periods. Both Ranjit Singh and Sher Shah Suri were soldiers of fortune and both rose to be great rulers who gave peace, tranquility and prosperity to the people. But both could not ensure worthy successors. Ranjit Singh left the kingdom in the hands of a self-willed heir who knew little about the complicated art of government. The courtiers fell into a state of quarrelsome imbecility leaving scope for the courtiers and the powerful neighbour, the British imperialists to play such ugly

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\* Cunningham J.D., *History of Sikhs*, 1981, p. 162.



games that led to the liquidation of the kingdom. It is painful to witness a host of princes, Sikh Sardars and courtiers vying with each other in seeking British help to advance their narrow interests and leaving the entire populace of the kingdom, particularly the Sikhs, dismayed and sulking under the fear of an imminent threat from the British to their hard-earned independence. The Khalsa army looked to the family of Ranjit Singh as the Sikh royal dynasty. They always reacted sharply to any injustice or insults shown to the princes and widows of Ranjit Singh. But the misfortune was that they could find none who could provide leadership and show administrative acumen. Griffin sounds perfectly right when he observes: "had a man of the reputation and administrative talent of Lehna Singh taken the lead in 1845 in the Punjab, the great troubles which came upon the country might have been averted. But he was no true patriot. He did not understand that religion of a statesman and indeed of every honest man, is to stand by his country in times of danger, sharing her griefs, and if need be, falling with her fall."\* Similarly, Ajit Singh Sandhawalia, from the standpoint of strength and courage, was considered a champion of the *Khalsa Raj*. But he got too much involved in the court intrigues. Of the Dogra brothers, Gulab Singh, the eldest, stands out as an incarnation of perfidy in all his actions. Such was the design of his machinations that each one of his moves reflected a tint of vengeance from within. It has yet to be analysed whether Gulab Singh was wreaking vengeance on the progeny of the Sukerchakias for the role that Charat Singh and Mahan Singh had played in the destruction of the power of the Jammu Maharaja, Ranjit Deo; who Gulab Singh claimed was brother of his grand-father. To me there seems to be a design both on the part of the Dogras as well as the Sandhawalias in accepting Duleep Singh as Maharaja of the

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\* Griffin, *Ranjit Singh*, p. 131.



Punjab. Both wanted to use the infant Maharaja and his ambitious mother (Rani Jindan) to gain supremacy in *Khalsa Darbar*. The British gave a nod from beyond the Sutlej to hasten the onset of anarchy in the state of Punjab and to minimise the chances of emergence of a personality, particularly a Sikh Sardar behind whom the Khalsa army could rally for the defence of the State. We find an identical pattern in the moves of the British and Gulab Singh. Both avowedly supported Duleep Singh and his mother but remained deeply involved in the court intrigues. Their menacing manoeuvres along the Sutlej and the hills aimed at hastening the dismemberment of the kingdom and confining the writ of the Maharaja and the *Khalsa Darbar* to the Central Punjab only. If we closely follow the events thereafter, we find patriotic forces; the Khalsa army with Maharani Jind Kaur and her son Maharaja Duleep Singh struggling on their own and frantically looking for a patriotic leader to save the kingdom. The army *Panchayats* thought it their religious duty to defend the kingdom. They issued appeals in the name of the Khalsa and swore to sacrifice themselves. Maharani Jind Kaur took Duleep Singh to Amritsar to administer him *Pahul* and soldiers flocked to the Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) to pray for the victory of the Khalsa. But alas! they were not destined to meet with success.

The banishment of Maharani Jind Kaur and deposition of Maharaja Duleep Singh left the Punjabis in general and the Sikhs in particular dazed and over-awed. The Punjab had been annexed and Dalhousie created Marquis. But the British policy makers perceived clearly that the zeal and bravery of the Khalsa had not been impaired; only treachery and deceit had triumphed. On the other hand, in the eyes of the Khalsa, Maharani Jind Kaur and Maharaja Duleep Singh still remained heroes as well as symbols of Sikh sovereignty, who fell victim to the machinations of the unscrupulous British imperialists and self-seeking courtiers. In order to ensure the subjugation of the Sikhs; the British



henceforth followed a policy that could break the mystique of the Khalsa invincibility. And this policy was to reflect through the treatment meted out to Maharani Jind Kaur and Maharaja Duleep Singh.

Maharani Jind Kaur had staked claim to become regent of her minor son and run the Govt. in accordance with a well established tradition in the Sukkerchakia family. Desan widow of Charat Singh had acted as regent for Mahan Singh and even supervised military operations. Mahan Singh's widow Raj Kaur remained regent and ran the affairs of the state till Ranjit Singh came of age. When Jindan became regent of Duleep Singh she was accepted as such by the Khalsa army. Jindan was wide-awake and politically shrewd. As per Sikh social customs, her being a woman was no drawback. She took no time to see through the British game. She was strongly opposed to giving unlimited authority to the British Resident in matters of internal administration and external relations. At this point; the British challenged her right to act as regent for her son. All the rest followed. Maharani Jind Kaur did not give in to the last. It was she who first noticed the disaffection of *Hindustani* sepoys in the British forces and sent letters first from Sheikhpura and then from Benares asking the sepoys to rise against the British. By doing so, she was in a way germinating the idea of mutiny among the *Hindustani* sepoys. When she met her son after fourteen years, she rekindled the spirit of the Khalsa in him that made him a crusader for the cause of the oppressed Indian people. No wonder the British had taken only ten months after Jindan's deportation, to annex Punjab!

Duleep Singh had been a witness to the gory scenes enacted at Lahore. He had known that the *firnagees* wanted him to do their bidding. This became evident to him when he refused to put *saffron* mark on the forehead of Tej Singh to create him a Raja for his "services." When separated from his mother and taken to



Shalimar Bagh for 'play' he looked downcast; made such remarks as to show that he was aware of the impending events and his virtual confinement. Moreover the British had come to know full well about the loyalty of the people of Punjab towards the ruling family. Consequently, the British decided to hasten his removal from the Punjab. A concerted effort was made to wean him away from his heritage as well as the milieu. When he enquired about the *Granth* and his *Granthi*, one Bhajan Lal with a Bible in hand, was introduced to him. Even the mention of such Christian precepts that could inspire him to find parallels from the Sikh precepts; was scrupulously avoided before Duleep Singh. Everything of Punjabi or Indian origin was to be detested. After two years of such measures manifestly taken for the 'good' of the young Maharaja Duleep Singh, he was 'baptized into Christianity.' Despite all this, Duleep Singh never left his oriental habits and his desire to be with his mother and his people remained strong. This fact is amply borne out by the subsequent events.

Duleep Singh started his crusade against the British in the true spirit and style of a Khalsa of the tenth Guru. He demanded his rights after he came of age in his 18th year and wanted his accounts for the pension guaranteed to him under the Treaty of 1849 and he also laid claim on his private property in Lahore and Gujranwala. He kept himself informed about political changes and events in India. It is interesting to note that he never claimed restoration but issued appeals in the name of 'the people and Princes of India' to rise against the British and free their country from the foreign yoke. He gave up his pension and also asked his mother to refuse considering any such offer. He was aware of the increasing importance of international diplomacy in the shaping of events in India. Therefore, he sought to internationalize the issue of "India in fetters with British imperialists." He kept up the sense of Sikh pride by refusing a stipend from any of the

European countries as a British foe and also shunned every suggestion to settle permanently somewhere in Europe; except his own country. He took the mortal frame of his mother to India for cremation in the family *Samadhis* at Lahore. When he was not allowed to visit Lahore for the purpose, he chose to cremate his mother on the banks of river Godawari and consign the remains to its waters because these waters had the holy touch of the feet of Guru Gobind Singh.\* He was concerned about the future of his progeny but gave no quarter in his scheme of things to the entreaties of his son to settle peacefully in England. Crusader Duleep Singh presents a multi-facet phenomenon before us historians, a dispossessed Indian prince, a rightful heir to an illustrious Sikh Maharaja, a symbol of sovereignty to the Sikhs, an Indian commoner seeking justice from British usurpers, one man roving Indian diplomatic mission seeking support for freedom struggle of the Indian people.

It so seems that we have to take a fresh look at all the events connected with the British annexation of the Punjab, the British dealings with Maharaja Duleep Singh and subsequent happenings till his death. I am sure the scholars assembled here will be able to initiate the process during the course of the proceedings of this seminar.




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\* A small cenotoph was raised over the site near the river bed where some of the ashes of the Maharani were deposited.



## I

## THE DYNASTY

*Gurbachan Singh Nayyar*

Historians usually trace the pedigree of Ranjit Singh from his ancestor Budha Singh whose name having usually occurred in English accounts in a corrupted form as Budh Singh. Sohan Lal Suri in his *Roznamcha* of Maharaja Ranjit Singh calls him Budha Singh.<sup>1</sup>

Some writers including Mohammed Latif and Lepel Griffin have tried to get at the genealogy of Maharaja Ranjit Singh from his remote ancestors. Although, the ancestry of Maharaja Ranjit Singh is usually connected with the village of Raja Sansi by means of one or the other tell-tale accounts; Latif, in his *History of the Punjab* refers to jat Kalu of Braich (Waraich) caste who settled with his family at village Bhattian about seventy-five kms. to the South-West of Lahore in A.D. 1470. The family had been putting up there for three generations. Kalu had to abandon this village for good owing to some unknown reasons and proceed towards Amritsar. He settled in a village which later came to be known as Raja Sansi. The village was known after the tribal name of its inhabitants called *Sansis*<sup>2</sup> who dwelt in huts or *jbugis*. Tradition goes that a son was born to Kalu who came to be called Jadoman. The Sansis of the village normally accepted him as their adopted son. Kalu ultimately settled near Wazirabad (Gujranwala) where he expired around A.D. 1488.<sup>3</sup>

It is stated that Jadoman undertook various campaigns in the

company of the people from Sansi tribe and breathed his last while fighting in one such expedition. His son Glabe got engaged in trade of buffaloes on the banks of the rivers Jhelum and Chenab. He also took significant part in the expeditions of the Sansi tribe in the Majha region and died in A.D. 1549.<sup>4</sup>

Kuddo, the son of Glabe settled in village Sukkarchak in the vicinity of Gujranwala in A.D. 1555. He also brought with him some cattle and settled for a peaceful life there. He was also known as Ramthal in the surrounding areas. This word is taken to mean the worshipper of God. Industry, hard work and honesty enabled him to own vast tract of cultivable land (though fragmented) which he tilled with the sweat of his brow. His death took place in AD. 1578. He had two sons namely Rajadeb and Parmu.<sup>5</sup>

Rajadeb followed the profession of his fore-fathers, namely agriculture and also ran a grocery shop in the village. He was blessed with three male children named Telu, Nilu and Takhat Mal. He was well versed in *Lande Mahajani* and *Gurmukhi* (?) script. Rajadeb died in A.D. 1620. Telu and Nilu expired in the prime of their youth. Only Takht Mal survived to continue the line. He continued his business as a petty financier. He obtained some land on lease in villages Khiali and Sukkarchak. He came to be known among the prominent personalities of the ilaqa. He is said to have died in A.D. 1653<sup>6</sup> leaving two sons Balu and Bara. Balu died at the age in 18 in a village feud. Bara, the lone survivor in the family turned to religious pursuits. According to an established tradition he preached the teachings of Guru Nanak in the villages around Sukkarchak and Khiali. He owned some land in the village of Sukkarchak but he did not adopt the profession of his forefathers. He spent most of his time in reading *Gurbani* and reciting the *Name*. It is said that he was a staunch Sikh of Guru Nanak but did not take *pabul*. Before his death in an accident, Bara is said to have advised his son Budha to go to



Amritsar especially to get baptised with the *Khande-Ka-Pahul*, recite Guru Granth Sahib and become a Singh of Guru Gobind Singh. Buddha was only nine when Bara died. Acting upon the advice of his father, Buddha went to Amritsar and received the Sikh baptism.<sup>7</sup>

In this way, Buddha was the first person in the family to embrace Sikhism. Courageous and bold as he was, Buddha chose to join the struggle initiated by Guru Gobind Singh and continued by Banda Bahadur for defending his faith and the Punjab on the eve of the dissolution of the Mughal Empire. Luck smiled on him and he got built a big house at Sukkarchak and also became the *Chaudhary* of the village. The residents of the place respected him for his gentle and affable behaviour. Besides, he remained ever ready to help the needy. His benevolence knew no discrimination. C. Smith writes that Buddha Singh was an honoured figure in the Sikh religious order and he also figured among the rich Sardars. Buddha Singh and his mare popularly known as *Desi* had become a by-word in the Rachna Doab. Riding his mare he crossed the Jhelum, the Chenab and the Ravi a number of times.<sup>8</sup>

Griffin regards Buddha Singh Sandhawalia as ancestor of Ranjit Singh. But the details of the account given by him differ from details listed by Syed Mohammed Latif and writers of his ilk. Although he pleads that the Sandhawalia Jats were related to the Sansi tribe but he considers 'Shul', a Bhatti Rajput as the founder, to have migrated from Ujjain to the Punjab where he founded a town, named Sialkot. Of course, Griffin is not very confident about a settlement of the Bhattis having existed at a distant place like Ujjain. But he has no doubt that the word 'Shul' gives a clue of Raja Salwan who was the son of Raja Gaj of Jaisalmer who had migrated to the Punjab after the demise of his father in a fight against a ruler of Khurasan and established himself at Sialkot after the destruction of Lahore.<sup>9</sup>

Raja Salwan had sixteen sons most of whose successors



ruled the hill states. Those who established their own independent kingdoms; included Rasalu, Dharmgad, Rup and Sonda. The family name Sansi thus got connected with the Sandhawalias. Sondha was sixth in descent from Raja Salvan's son Jaudhar. All his children having expired one after the other, the astrologers advised him to present his first child to an individual who visited his house first of all after the birth of the child.<sup>10</sup> It is said that the first visitor to Sondha's house after the birth of the child was a beggar of the Sansi tribe whom the child was duly presented. But the beggar returned the child the next day. The child came to be known as Sahnsarpal after this incident which means reared by a Sansi. Another legend relating to the above incident also forms a part of Griffin's account. It is stated that the wife of Sondha was carried to a distant village of the Sansis when she was in the family way. Throughout the period of pregnancy she was well looked after. Griffin says that after tallying the genealogical tables of the Bhattis and Sandhawalias; it appears that Sahnsarpal was the son of Bhoni who was 4th in descent Jodhar.<sup>11</sup> And thus he became the founder of the dynasty of Sandhawalias.<sup>12</sup> The village of Raja Sansi which has remained the residence of the Sandhawalia chiefs since then was founded by Kirtu in A.D. 1570. Kirtu's grandson Khokar settled in the course of time in the plains of Majha and founded many a village there. The rise of Sandhawalias and Ladwas is traced from Khokar's grand-son Vigha. Takht Mal a Grandson of Vigha and Pahara Mal, the son of Takht Mal were *Sehajdhari* Sikhs who preached Sikhism in the surrounding areas.<sup>13</sup>

Buddha Singh from whom the genealogical table of Maharaja Ranjit Singh is traced had two sons, Chanda Singh and Naudh Singh who were no less promising than their father. Sayyid Muhammad Latif writes that Naudh Singh had four sons; Charat Singh, Chet Singh, Maghi Singh and Dal Singh. The adventurers were the masters of the age then. Naudh Singh began his forays



upto the banks of river Sutlej. His influence grew rapidly. A prominent chief, Sardar Gulab Singh offered the hand of his daughter to Naudh Singh.<sup>14</sup>

Tradition has it that Naudh Singh stood by Nawab Kapur Singh, the chief of tile Dal Khalsa during the first invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali in AD. 1749. He made many a bold assault on the enemy. This enabled him to organise his own *Jatha* which came to be known as Sukkarchakia *jatha*. Naudh Singh invaded the Chatthas of Rasulpur and punished them for their oppression. It is stated that he received some gun injuries during his struggle against the Afghans in A.D. 1749 which never got healed till he died in A.D. 1752.<sup>15</sup>

According to Sayyid Muhammad Latif, Charat Singh was born in A.D. 1721 and was the eldest of the four sons of Naudh Singh. He conquered vast territories in the Rachna Doab along with his brothers, Dal Singh and Chet Singh. The youngest of his brothers, Maghi Singh had died earlier. He broke alliance with the Faizullahpurias. Some scholars consider him of 20 years of age on the eve of the death of his father in A.D. 1752. The courage and prowess that he displayed on the battlefield attracted many a young adventurer to his side. He was the real founder of the Sukkarchakia *Misl* and made it one of the most powerful *Misls* with Gujranwala habitation (a founded by himself) as the centre of his activities.<sup>16</sup>

In the beginning Charat Singh had an alliance with the Bhangis. Gradually, as Ganesh Das observes, *bu-e-riast* or political ambition grew stronger and stronger with him. Politically ostentatious as he was, his *Misl* achieved such successes that enticed the neighbouring chiefs to seek protection and alliance of Charat Singh. One Muhammad Yar, the Chief of Khiali gave his territory in protectorate to Charat Singh and joined his forces. Milkha Singh, the chief of the *Ilaqa* in the proximity of Gujranwala also submitted before Charat Singh along with twenty



horsemen. In this way Charat Singh's *Misl* which comprised 150 well equipped horsemen provided *Rakhi* or protection to the farmers against the invaders in the territory around Gujranwala. Charat Singh was a brave warrior of religious disposition who administered baptism of the sword to many who offered to join the fold of the Khalsa. According to a statement of Sohan Lal Suri given in his *Rozanamcha* of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, nobody was allowed to join the Sukkarchakia Misl until or unless he was administered *pahul*. Tradition goes that Amir Singh Sansi was a close companion of Charat Singh and he took *pahul* at the ripe age of 100 years. Amir Singh was, a prominent member of the Faizullahpuria Misl but had withdrawn from that Misl. He married his elder daughter to Charat Singh in A.D. 1756. This matrimonial alliance added to the strength of the Sukkarchakias.<sup>17</sup> Charat Singh and Amir Singh joined hands to strengthen their positions in the Rachna Doab. They humbled the faujdar of Eminabad (Gujranwala) many a time and raised a mud fortress at Gujranwala. Tradition tells us that unable to face the forces of Ahmad Shah Abdali on the eve of his invasion in A.D. 1762, Charat Singh sent his family to Jammu and faced the foe bravely along with his horsemen. Charat Singh's horsemen created havoc in the enemy ranks and wrested much of their ammunition. The Afghans raised to the ground the Kacha fort got constructed by Charat Singh in the vicinity of Gurjanwala. Charat Singh invaded Wazirabad (Gujranwala) after the departure of Ahmad Shah Abdali and re-occupied the territories. The *Ilaqa* of Wazirabad was given to one Bakhshish Singh, a chief of repute. Eminabad was given to Dal Singh. Charat Singh after re-establishing himself got a new fort built at Gujranwala. He wrested a *kacha* fortress from Nur-ud-Din Bamzai, a military commander of Ahmad Shah Abdali. Afterwards Charat Singh also conquered Jalalpur (Jattaan). Dhanni Pothohar, Dhaunkal etc. and collected revenues. Sahib Khan, the chief of Pind Dadan Khan saved himself by offering



a huge sum of money as *nazrana* to Sardar Charat Singh. The *paragana* of Pind Dadan Khan was conferred on Budh Singh and Gaur Singh. A fortress was raised at the place for defence. The areas around Kot Buddha, Kot Sahib Khan and Raja-Ka-Kot and the salt mines of Kheora were also brought under his sway by Sardar Charat Singh. Charat Singh's reputation considerably increased in the eyes of the people when he relieved the people of Gujranwala from the atrocities committed by Khwaja Obed, *Nazim* of Lahore, inflicting sever punishment on the administrator of Eminabad and giving crushing defeat to Nur-ud-Din Bamzai.<sup>19</sup> The vast areas conquered by Sardar Charat Singh included Wazirabad, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Eminabad, Pind Dadan Khan, Dhani Pothohar, Chakwal, Khushab, Rohtas, the salt mines of Kheora, etc. The conquest of vast territories and increase of military power by Sardar Charat Singh came to be looked upon with jealousy and envy by many a Sikh Sardar. The Bhangis took Particular note of the growing power of the Sukkarchakias. The mutual enmity of the *Misls* had reached its climax by the time Charat Singh was consolidating his position.<sup>20</sup> The expedition of Sardar Charat Singh against Raja Ranjit Deo of Jammu aggravated the situation. The Raja of Jammu was labouring under some misconception against his elder son Brij Raj Deo and wanted to leave the kingdom of Jammu in favour of his youngest son, Mian Daler Singh. Brij Deo appealed to Sardar Charat Singh for assistance and acquainted him about his legal claims on the property of his father. He offered attractive terms to the Sukkarchakia Sardar in return for help. Charat Singh along with the forces of Kanhaiya Sardars, Jai Singh and Hakikat Singh (who were against Raja Ranjit Deo) attacked Jammu in A.D. 1774. Ranjit Deo also secured help from the hill rajas of Kangra, Chamba and Nurpur and Hari Singh Bhangi's sons Ganda Singh and Jhanda Singh. But before a decisive battle could be fought, Charat Singh was accidentally killed by the busting of a matchlock in the hands of one of his own followers.<sup>21</sup>



Sardar Charat Singh was one of the most sagacious and astute chiefs of his times. Many a subordinate chief submitted to him in view of his consolidated position and shape he was able to give to his *Misl*.<sup>22</sup>

Mahan Singh born in A.D. 1706, the only son of Charat Singh, succeeded his father in the shape of territorial acquisitions worth Rs. 3 lacs revenue annually. With the reduction of Rasul Nagar situated on the bank of the Chenab and the subsequent defeat of the Chathas, the achievements of Sardar Mahan Singh began to be mentioned far and near. Mahan Singh with the military support of Jai Singh Kanhaiya invaded Rasul Nagar with 6000 well equipped horsemen. *Zam Zama* the historic cannon of those days was a bone of contention and the main cause of the battle. This cannon having been very heavy could not be carried across the Chenab on the eve of an attack against the Chathas and was left with Pir Muhammad Chatha by Jhanda Singh Bhangi. Mahan Singh declared that cannon was the property of *Khalsaji*<sup>23</sup> and laid claims on it. The siege of Rasul Nagar lasted for a period of four months. The whole of the area of Rasul Nagar under the Chathas was laid waste by Mahan Singh and the victory that came his way enhanced his prestige.<sup>24</sup>

After this victory of the Sukkarchakias which took place in A.D. 1776, several of the Bhangi Chiefs, solicited alliance with Mahan Singh. Mahan Singh renamed Rasul Nagar as Ram Nagar after the name of Guru Ram Das. The administration of the newly conquered territory was handed over to a prominent chief named, Dal Singh. Pir Muhammad a famous Muslim poet has portrayed the battle between Ghulam Muhammad Chatha of Rasul Nagar and Mahan Singh in his composition *Chathian Di Var*. He states that Sardar Mahan Singh resorted to fight when the Chatha Chief did not pay him the annual tribute. The Chatha Chief was a bitter enemy of the Sikh *Misl* chiefs. Assistance was sought by the Sukkarchakia Chief from Sardar Gujjar Singh



Bhangi and his son Sahib Singh Bhangi. The son of Ghulam Mohd., was captured by Gujjar Singh Bhangi and was handed over to Mahan Singh who set him free after realising tribute. *Chathian Di Var* brings this strategy into lime light:

*Ghale Mahan Singh ne kujh naukar khase*

*Jao tusin Ghulame pase*

*Mango takke sab us ton kise nal kiase*

*Jan ban liao us nun kise nal dillase*

*Jat fat bin badian na aye rase.*<sup>25</sup>

Chathas were defeated by Mahan Singh a number of times. Mahan Singh's campaigns of Isa Khel, Pindi Bhattian and Sahiwal paved the way for the conquest of Jammu in A.D. 1782.

Mahan Singh's son Ranjit Singh was born on Monday, the 13th of November in A.D. 1780 at Gujranwala. Some historians and writers give the date of birth of Ranjit Singh as second November but, the writers who follow Sohan Lal Suri give the date as 13th of November, 1780. On the eve of this happy occasion, Mahan Singh distributed a lot of money among the poor in charity. An atmosphere of joy and pleasure prevailed everywhere in his camp. At a very young age, boy Ranjit Singh caught small pox and lost one eye. Expensive gifts were sent to the holy temples of Jawalamukhi and Kangra, where the Brahmins prayed for the long life of the child whose life seemed to be in danger. Sayyid Muhammad Latif rightly states that nobody could know at that time that this child would rule over the land of five rivers.

Mahan Singh expired in April 1790 in the fort of Gujranwala after sudden illness. Contemporary writings very confidently claim that Mahan Singh was a sagacious and astute statesman whose fame had spread far and wide due to his qualities of head and heart. Ranjit Singh was only ten at that time. During the minority of Ranjit Singh, the command of the Sukkarchakia *Misl* came into the hands of his mother, Raj Kaur. She had the

assistance and support of Diwan Lakhpat Rai and Sada Kaur Kanhaiya, mother-in-law of Ranjit Singh.

From his very childhood Ranjit Singh was fearless and brave. He was sent to the *dharamsal* of Bhai Bhag Singh for learning Gurmukhi. Bute Shah in his *Twarikh-i-Punjab* states that Ranjit Singh did not show much inclination towards studies. As was required in those days of turnomol, Ranjit Singh learnt swimming and the art of warfare. He became a past master in hunting and shooting. He also sometimes accompanied his father in his campaigns. He was engaged to Mehtab Kaur daughter of Gurbax Singh Kanhaiya and Sada Kaur. Sardarni Sada Kaur was an astute and sagacious woman. When Ranjit Singh succeeded his father an arrangement was arrived at for the defence and administration of the Sukkarchaika state. Sardar Dal Singh Gill and Gurbax Singh Wazirabadia were asked to look after the defences of the principality and military campaigns and Diwan Lakhpat Rai was entrusted with the task of collection of revenue and management of finances.

Ranjit Singh's career can be described as a case of phenomenal rise to power in A.D. 1797. At this time; many contemporary chiefs of fame were active in the field. Bhangi Sardar, Gulab Singh commanded extensive territories because his *Misl* was the foremost in respect of economic and military resources. Kanhaiyas, Ahluwalias and Ramgarhias also figured prominently. Muslim chiefs of Kasur, Jhang and Bahawalpur along with Afghan chiefs of Multan, Peshawar and Kashmir would not easily allow Ranjit Singh's designs to have their full play. Of course the British and Marathas had not yet commenced evincing keen interest in the areas situated to West of the Yamuna. Shah Zaman, the grandson of Ahmad Shah was another nuisance and obstructive force. Having established himself as the ruler of Kabul, he led invasions to the Punjab many a time between A.D. 1793 to A.D. 1797 to regain power in the area



situated to the West of the Ravi. Ranjit Singh gradually became a leading Sardar among the Sikh *Misls* and faced his rivals bravely. He wrested Lahore from Shah Zaman. The three Bhangi chiefs of Lahore namely Sobha Singh, Gujjar Singh and Lehna Singh also could not withstand the might of the young Sukkarchakia chief and quietly left the town. On the Sardars having slipped away with their men, a witty poet remarked:

*Sobhye di sobha gai*

*Gujjar da gaya mall*

*Lehne nun dena aya*

*Tinon hoe Kangal.*<sup>26</sup>

Afterwards, Ranjit Singh scored a bloodless victory at Bhasin against the rival chiefs Gulab Singh Bhangi and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, an old Sikh veteran. Subsequently Amritsar was also captured.

Ranjit Singh then onwards followed the policy of show of might and diplomacy in acquiring the territories of the rival chiefs to become the ruler of the entire Sikh nation/Punjab. Territories of Bhangis, Karorsinghia, Dallewalias, Faizullahpurias, Nakais etc. were annexed after conquests. Sardars Jodh Singh Ramgarhia and Fateh Singh Ahluwalia were won over with diplomatic gestures. Their assistance was also sought for the extension of territories. The chiefs of Phulkian states managed to forestall the designs of Ranjit Singh by seeking protection of the British. By 1809, Ranjit Singh's supremacy over the hill states of Kangra had also been established. Ranjit Singh also exacted tribute from Multan and finally annexed it in June, 1818.

The first expedition against Kashmir was sent in AD. 1813 under Diwan Mohkam Chand. The second Kashmir expedition was dispatched in 1814 which remained futile. The third and final expedition sent in 1819 under Misr Diwan Chand, bore fruit and the Afghans were given a crushing defeat in the battle of Supir

(Sopore). Dera Gazi Khan, Dera Ismail Khan, Bannu and Mankera also fell thereafter.

For the conquest of Peshawar Maharaja Ranjit Singh undertook first expedition in November 1818 followed by the battle of Jahangira and then Naushera in AD. 1823 against the Afghans who were crushed and Peshawar was ultimately annexed in AD. 1834. All attempts of the Afghans to recover Peshawar were foiled by Ranjit Singh. Meanwhile conquests on other fronts continued & the Lahore Kingdom got extended upto Ladakh and Sulaiman Hills in the North and to the Sutlej and Shikarpur towards the South-East and the South-West.<sup>27</sup>

Maharaja Ranjit Singh died on June 27, 1839 and was succeeded by his eldest son Kharak Singh who had been nominated as their apparent in AD. 1816.

Sher Singh succeeded Kharak Singh in AD. 1841 after the latter's demise; who in turn was killed by a gun shot on 15th September, 1843 by Ajit Singh Sandhawalia. It will be appropriate to make a mention here of the other sons of Ranjit Singh. Tara Singh, the twin brother of Sher Singh born in AD. 1807 to Rani Mehtab Kaur had died at Dasuya in September 1859. Ishar Singh born of Rani Mehtab Kaur in A.D. 1804 died at an early age. Pashaura Singh & Kashmira Singh born to Rani Daya Kaur were killed in the interenecine warfare. Multana Singh (Mother Rattan Kaur) finds little mention in the chronicles. Duleep Singh (born 6th September 1838 to Rani Jindan) became the ruler of the Punjab on 15th of September 1843. He was deposed on 29th march 1849 after the second Anglo-Sikh War. He was converted to Christianity on 8th March 1853 and was dispatched to England in AD. 1854. He came back to India in January 1861 to see his mother Rani Jindan and took her along. Rani Jindan expired on 1st August, 1863. Duleep Singh married Bamba Muller, the daughter of a German merchant Ludwig Muller and an Abysynian



Egyptian mother Sofia at Alexandria in Egypt at the British Consulate, on June 7, 1864.<sup>27</sup>

Duleep Singh had three sons & three daughters. None of them left behind any issue. Maharaja Duleep Singh breathed his last on October 22, 1893 at Paris.

### Foot Notes

1. Suri, Sohan lal, *Umdat-ul-Tawarikh*, lahore, 1885-1889, volume II, p. 2.
2. Latif, Syed Mohammad, *History of the Punjab from the remotest antiquity to the present time*, Calcutta, 1891, p.336.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., pp.336-37.
7. Ibid., p.337.
8. Teja Singh, Ganda Singh, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh: First Death Centenary Volume*, Patiala, 1970 (reprint), p.18. Sita Ram Kohli, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, Delhi, 1953, p.30.
9. Griffin, Sir Lepel, *Ranjit Singh*, Oxford, 1905, pp.140-210.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid. This whole story appears to be a mythical account. -Ed.
14. Latif, op.cit., p.337, Princep in his *Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab and Political Life of Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, (1970 reprint) States that Naudh Singh was the first in the family who embraced Sikh religion, p.18.
15. Ashok, Shamsheer Singh, *Jangnameh*, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar.
16. Latif, op.cit., p.338-39.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Teja Singh, Ganda Singh, op.cit., p.13.
20. Cunningham, Joseph Davy, *A History of the Sikhs from the origin of*

- the Nation to the Battles of Sutlej*, London, p.118.
21. Ibid., p.91, 103, 106.
  22. Ibid., Latif, op.cit. pp.339-41.
  23. Cunningham, op.cit., pp. 91,103,106, Latif, op.cit., pp.340-41.
  24. Ashok, Shamsher Singh, op.cit., p. 139.
  25. Pir Muhammad, *Chathian Di Var*, p.139.
  26. Nayyar, G.S. *Sikh Polity and Political Institutions*, New Delhi, 1979, p.115.
  27. Ganda Singh, *Maharaja Duleep Singh Correspondence*, Patiala, 1977, p.93.





## II

# RISE OF THE SUKARCHAKIAS

*Radha Sharma*

**I**t is pertinent to situate the rise of the Sukkarchakia family in the larger historical and political context of the late eighteenth century. The eighteenth century in the Indian history is the period of the decline and disintegration of the Mughal power and the rise of successor states and new powers like the Marathas and the British. In the Punjab in the last quarter of eighteenth century, there were more than one hundred independent rulers. In the hills the Rajputs who were earlier tributaries of the Mughals had now become independent. The important among them were the chiefs of Mandi, Suket, Bilaspur, Kulu, Jammu and Kangra. In the plains a number of Muslims and Sikhs chiefs rose to power. The important among the Muslim chiefs were the Sials of Jhang, Kharals in Kot Kalmalia, Gakkhars in Rawalpindi, Tiwanas in Nurpur, Chatthas in Rasulpur and Afghans in Multan. Among the Sikhs were the Bhangis in Gujrat, Jai Singh Kanhaiya in Batala, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and Fateh Singh Ahluwalia in Bari and Bist Jalandhar Doabs and Charat Singh Sukkarchakia in the Rachna Doab. Of the Sikh Chiefs; Sukkarchakias emerged as the most powerful and established the kingdom of Lahore. For a better approximation of the rise of the Sukkarchakias we may now turn to the political institutions and political developments of the period. The process of disintegration of the Mughal empire and the fragmentation of the political power began with the death



of Aurangzeb in 1707. Only three years after his death a serious uprising in Punjab was led by Banda Bahadur who was commissioned by Guru Gobind Singh to lead the Khalsa against the oppressors. Banda attempted to establish a sovereign Sikh Rule in the *Sarkar* of Sirhind and in the some *Parganas* of Bari and Bist Jalandhar Doabs. His attempt failed but he had shaken the Mughal authority to its roots. And the struggle of the Sikhs against the Mughal authority continued. It is interesting to note that Banda in his struggle attracted support largely from the rural segments of society.

After the death of Banda, the centre of Sikh activity against the Mughals shifted from the *Sarkar* of Sirhind to the Mughal province of Lahore. Throughout the Mughal period from 1716 to 1752, the successive Mughal Governors of Lahore adopted a vigorous policy of repression against the politically active Sikhs formally known as the *Tat Khalsa* who lived as out-laws in the less accessible tracts of the province, plundering or killing the government officials and their supporters. While the Sikhs in general lived as peaceful citizens.

The developments of 1730s indicate that the number of the *Tat Khalsa* was increasing and consequently, Zakariya Khan the son and successor of Abdus Samad Khan was becoming more and more grim in his measures of suppression. In 1738, Zakariya Khan not only resumed the revenue free grants of the *Khalsa* but also ordered the execution of the Bhai Mani Singh, a Sikh scholar and head priest of *Darbar Sahib* who was the rallying force behind the increasing number of politically active Sikhs. This further hardened the attitude of the Sikhs for defiance and resistance.

The invasion of Nadir Shah in 1738-39 diverted the attention of Zakariya Khan for a while and gave an opportunity to the Sikhs to strengthen themselves politically as well as financially by plundering the rear of Nadir Shah's army on its return journey from Delhi to Kabul. The struggle for obtaining



the governorship of Lahore within the family of Zakariya Khan and others that followed his death, further helped the Sikhs to increase their power.

Muin-ul-Mulk who had defeated Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1748 was appointed governor of Lahore in the same year. Like Zakariya Khan he too failed in his alternative policies of conciliation and repression against the Sikhs. His failure and the rising number of the Sikhs is reflected in the popular saying '*Mannu asadi datri, asin Mannu de soe, Jiyon Jiyon Mannu wadhada, asin doon swai hoe*'. The underlying meaning of this proverb is 'the more Mannu mows us down, the more numerous we grow'. The defeat of Mir Mannu by Ahmad Shah Abdali, the Afghan invader, and his appointment by him as his representative at Lahore in 1752 marked virtually the end of the Mughal rule in the Punjab.

The emergence of a regular kind of Organization of Sikh volunteers into *Jathas* or bands is generally attributed to this phase of their activity. In the early 1750s some of the leaders of such *Jathas* or bands felt strong enough to start occupying pockets of territories in the Bari Doab in which the capital of the province was situated. Jai Singh Kanhaiya, for instance started issuing orders to local officials in 1750. A lesser known leader named Hakumat Singh ordered the local officials not to interfere with a religious grant in the *Pargana* of Kahnuwan in the present district of Gurdaspur. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia occupied Fatehabad in the present district of Amritsar in 1753. The *faujdar*s and other officials who were appointed by Abdali were harassed by the Sikhs and were not allowed to join their posts for instance, Qasim Beg, *faujdar* of Patti and Sa'adat Khan Afridi of Jalandhar were hounded out of their territories. During this time, Ahmad Shah Abdali was busy in settling the issue of supremacy with the Marathas who wanted to establish their control over the Punjab on behalf of the Mughal emperor. This issue was settled in favour of Abdali in the battle of Panipat in 1761. Abdali returned to



Afghanistan after appointing his own governor in the province of Lahore. A few months later the governor appointed by Abdali in Lahore was defeated by the Sikhs near Gujranwala. To teach the Sikhs a lesson Abdali returned to the Punjab and killed more than 5000 Sikhs in a single day in a running battle in the areas now forming districts of Ludhiana and Sangrur. But only six months later, Abdali had an indecisive engagement with them near Amritsar. As soon as he returned to Kabul, his appointees were dislodged by the Sikhs. When Abdali came again in 1765, he was on the defensive and had to go back to Kabul without fighting even a single battle.

By 1765, with the exception of a few small non-Sikh principalities of Talwan, Nakodar, Kapurthala, Phagwara, Kasur, Jandiala Guru and Qadian, the rest of the principalities belonged to the Sikh chiefs whose number in the province of Lahore was more than two scores. This was exactly the time when the Sikh chiefs formally assumed sovereignty by declaring the Khalsa a state and striking coin at Lahore after its occupation by three of their leaders, Gujjar Singh, Lehna Singh Bhangis and Sobha Singh Kanhaiya. The Sikh chiefs were now left free to extend and consolidate their territorial possessions.

To meet the practical demands of this historical situation, the Sikhs evolved some of their characteristic arrangements which helped them in acquisition of political power. Their greatest assets were the ties of kinship and above all, their religious faith and doctrines which served as the force ground for their military and political actions. They undertook to provide protection (*Rakhi*) to the villagers against all outsiders, in return for a share of the produce which was generally much less than the revenues paid to the Mughal government. The system, thus, became an important instrument for establishing political control over a large part of the province of Lahore. For the purpose of offence and defence, the Sikhs organized themselves into small



combinations later known as *misl*s. Territory was often occupied by a *misl* as a unit and sometimes by a combinations of two or more *misl*s. Invariably, before undertaking a campaign the Sikh leaders would arrive at a consensus under arrangement of an institution called *Gurmata*. The *Gurmata* (literally a decision of the body of Khalsa Panth) was morally binding on all, since the *Khalsa* was the veritable form of the Guru. Those who joined together to execute such a decision formed the *Dal Khalsa*. On the whole, these arrangements made the Sikhs more formidable. The faith of the Sikhs and the process of acquisition of power were, thus, closely linked.

It is in this broader context that the rise of Sukkarchakias under the leadership of Charat Singh, Mahan Singh and Ranjit Singh can be appreciated better. Buddha Singh the great great grand father of Ranjit Singh a Jat cultivator of village Sukkarchak near Gujranwala and his son Naudh Singh acquainted with other Sikh Sardars. He was married in an influential family of Gulab Singh, a Sansi - Jat of Majitha who was considered as the chief of the Majithias. This matrimonial alliance increased the status of Naudh Singh. Naudh Singh along with his associates collected huge wealth by plundering the baggage of the invading army of Nadir Shah in 1739. He built a big house surrounded by a high mud wall at village Sukkarchak known as Sukkarchakia *garhi*. By 1745, Naudh Singh was the leader of one of the twenty five bands of the Sikhs and was also recognized as the leader of note from Sukkarchak in the Dal Khalsa organization.

At the time of the first invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali, Naudh Singh and his family shifted to Majitha. Here, Naudh Singh died and his eldest son Charat Singh became the leader of the Sukkarchakia group. At that time he had one hundred horsemen and soldiers at his command. Charat Singh increased his resources and horses by his daring pursuits. He humbled many Mughal chieftains including the chief of Eminabad (Gujranwala).



By 1750, the number of horsemen and soldiers under Charat Singh grew into 400 and he also established his *rakhi* in several villages around Gujranwala and Ramnagar, then Rasul Nagar. In 1758 he built a fortress at Gujranwala which served as the base for his political rise. He conquered the territories of Wazirabad and Eminabad and gave them to Gurbaksh Singh and Dal Singh respectively. After the third battle of Panipat in 1761, Ahmad Shah Abdali sent his general, *Nur-ud-din* to punish the Sikh chiefs who had plundered his baggage. Charat Singh along with other Sikh Sardars checked his advance on the eastern bank of river Chenab. The Afghans were compelled to surrender. *Nur-ud-din* fled to Jammu. The booty and the horses that came to the Sikh chiefs in consequence of this victory, were distributed among the conquerors. Charat Singh returned with more than one thousand horsemen and soldiers and a huge stock of army equipments, to Gujranwala. This success made him a front-rank leader among the Sikh chiefs. By the end of 1770, Charat Singh had occupied some parts of the Pargana of Eminabad, Qila Sahib Singh, Qila Mian Singh, fort of Sialkot, Pind Dadan Khan, Miani and collected tribute from the *Zamindars* of Chakwal, Jalalpur, Jattan, Saidpur and chiefs of Rohtas and Jhelam.

Mahan Singh inherited large territories from his father, Charat Singh and also added the fort of Rohtas, Kotli Lohran, Rasulnagar and Alipur (renamed Ramnagar and Akalgarh respectively) Shaikhupura and kot Battanwala to it. By 1780s the Sukkarchakia family had its hold over a contiguous tract in the Rachna Doab and in some parts of Chaj and Sind Sagar Doabs. They had nearly 20,000 horsemen and an annual revenue of more than 10 lakh rupees at their command. Easily the Sukkarchakias had come to be listed among the largest of the Sikh chieftainships.

Ranjit Singh, on the basis of these acquired assets and his own capability rose to be the Maharaja of the kingdom of Lahore which was one of the most powerful kingdoms in India in the



early 19th century. It is an irony of fate that his son Maharaja Duleep Singh had to sign away this kingdom to the British on 29th March 1849, within a decade after the death of the Lion of the Punjab.

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## III

## AN ILL-STARRED MAHARAJA : DULEEP SINGH

*V.N. Datta*

There are three important studies on Maharaja Duleep Singh and his times. The first one 'Queen Victoria's Maharaja Duleep Singh (1838-93)' by Michael Alexander and Sushila Anand (published in 1980) is a lucid, vivid and straight forward biography based largely on the royal archives at Windsor and the public records in London. Duleep Singh emerges from this briskly written work a pathetic figure, an object of pity and ridicule at times, and almost a puppet in British hands to delight their whims and caprice. Lord Dalhousie, the Governor General of India, regards him in some sort his son. Queen Victoria remained his best card. He appears a thoroughly Victorian English county gentleman at large, wallowing in luxury and easy living, expending on his style of life beyond his means and thereby incurring huge debts.

Stung by his dwindling resources to meet his financial needs Duleep Singh asserted his claims but the Home Government and the Government of India repudiate his claims. This infuriated him. He raised banner of rebellion against the British. He embraced the Sikh faith which he had earlier renounced. He abandoned the title of a Maharaja. He threatened to go to India and was arrested at Aden. He appealed to the Czar of Russia to attack India and made proclamations exhorting his countrymen



to free their motherland from the fetters of British servitude. He continued till his death asserting his claims through a prolific correspondence with the British Government but in vain. Finally he died a dispirited and a broken man.

This is the picture drawn by Michael Alexander and Sushila Anand which attracts the general reader and lands itself to an easy narrative without structural analysis. This study allows much room over which the readers' imagination may range. On the whole, the perspective provided is British and the value of this sensitive work would have greatly enhanced if the authors had made use of the records of the national Archives of India, particularly the papers relating to Punjab in the period under study. *Sir John Login and Duleep Singh* by Leena Login. London (1889) is based on the correspondence between Duleep Singh and the British authorities. Lady Login was a contemporary witness and therefore she provides intimate touches to Duleep Singh's portrait. She laments Duleep Singh's disloyalty to the British and regards it purely a creation of the British high-handedness. The overall picture presented in this work is not dissimilar to the one presented by Michael Alexander and Sushila Anand.

The doyen of Punjab historians, Dr. Ganda Singh brought out a volume of 731 pages entitled *Maharaja Duleep Singh: Correspondence* published in 1977. It is divided into two parts, the first covering a 100 paged Introduction and the later part listing Duleep Singh's correspondence to and from with the British authorities in addition to some extracts from 'The Tribune'. This volume is most valuable and indispensable to our understanding of Duleep Singh and his milieu. Avoiding dogmatic position; Dr. Ganda Singh has sifted the material with skill and rigour. This volume demonstrates honest and sound scholarship true to the text which forms the whole Introduction. According to Dr. Ganda Singh, Duleep Singh was worst hit for no fault of his. Dr. Ganda Singh presents Duleep Singh in his piteous plight who forced by



circumstances incarnated later the spirit of national defiance. These three works are mainly narrative and not given to evaluation. These studies are not essentially ideas-driven, a way of examining otherwise abstract historical or philosophical concepts through the mediating gloss of an actual life.

I think there are certain questions that need to be answered. Duleep Singh was a child of misfortune, a tragic figure who suffered because of what he inherited. As a child he lived dislocated times. His plight is all the more miserable when contrasted with the shining glory of his father Maharaja Ranjit Singh who was versatile in *Realpolitik*. The point about Ranjit Singh is that he unified Punjab and created an aristocracy which stood by him like a strong pillar. There was personal fire in him combined with unbounded curiosity and firm will which amazed the British. Sure of himself, he had the genius to realize like Bismarck the limits of Power. That is why with shrewd political acumen, practical skill and diplomatic finesse he kept his kingdom intact. But what he built with remarkable courage, imagination and craft fell like a pack of cards after him. A titan was gone and pigmies had come!

The period between Ranjit Singh's death in 1839 and the annexation of Punjab in 1849 was marked by assassinations, conspiracies, sectional conflicts, treacheries and betrayals. Three Maharajas, three princes of blood, three *vazirs* and the two of the principal Sardars were put to death. There was no one to control the situation. Men of probity and commonsense like Lehana Singh Majithia preferred to shift to Benares. It was like 'The priests who slew the slayer, And shall himself be slain'. Men were fighting among themselves: looting, intriguing and fornicating. According to contemporary evidence it was rare to see a Sikh soldier sober after sunset — everyone was under the influence of liquor. Jawahar Singh disguised himself as a dancing girl in an open court. In a broad daylight on a street of Lahore, a few



soliders robbed a woman of ornaments when she was going to commit Suttee i.e. Sati. It was the worst of times — an Age of Trouble to which the young Duleep Singh was a witness.

The civil authority collapsed before the strident and reckless soldier. It was the army that made and unmade governments. There was madness of the political system. The ruling chiefs were self-destructive individuals acting thoughtlessly by not knowing whither they were going. Dr. Ganda Singh and Dr. Fauja Singh held the view that the British had an overall design to annex Punjab but this writer thinks that the First Sikh War could have been avoided or in any case postponed. It was the turbulent and impetuous Sikh soldiery that led to the confrontation with the British; and the ruling chiefs motivated by self-interest thought that only by embroiling the Sikh soldiery in the war they could ensure their status and power inviolate.

I think that towards the latter part of his life Duleep Singh shrewdly saw through the British game by studying the Blue books in British Museum and was not taken in by the outward courtsey, sweet words and politeness of British officials. He brought to evaluation of the whole complex problem of his status his own perspective which made it clear to him that his rights as a sovereign has been deliberately violated by the British authorities.

Despite the fact that he led the life of an Englishman, Duleep Singh was neither an agent of British Imperial enterprise nor a defender of British ruling classes. He became virtually an invertebrate foe of British rule in India. He was clear, which is evident from his correspondence with Sir Charles Wood; Secretary of State for India, that the Second Sikh War was a myth. This comes out in Jagmohan Mahajan's *Annexation of Punjab* (1990). Therefore Dalhousie's rhetorical pronouncement at the Government House banquet "Unwarned by Precedent, uninfluenced by example the Sikh nation has called for war, and



on my words, Sir, they shall have it with a vengeance", was gratuitous, misleading and totally unjustified. Even after this warning no formal declaration of war was conveyed to the Lahore Durbar. The British Resident; Sir Fredrick Currie pointed out the absurdities of continuing to protect and maintain a state 'which we declare to be at war with us'.

After the First Sikh War the British authorities did not think it appropriate to annex Punjab on practical grounds but did not intend it to remain independent. By the Treaty of Bhyrowal of 26th December 1846 the British Resident had become the virtual ruler of Punjab.

Duleep Singh was about eight year old when the Treaty of Bhyrowal was signed and above twelve when Punjab was annexed. Unjustifiably the British held the Lahore Durbar responsible for the Second Sikh War when in reality the mantle of power had descended on the Resident by the Treaty of Bhyrowal. The British forced this war on the Durbar in their larger political and military interests. Duleep Singh was thus a victim to be slaughtered in the game of British power politics. Some of the distinguished British civil servants like Sir Henry Lawrence and Fredrick Currie vehemently opposed the annexation and described it as unwise and impolitic. This infuriated Dalhousie who removed Lawrence from the Residentsip of Punjab and dispatched him to Rajputana. I think that the annexation of Punjab was morally more unjustified than the annexation of Oudh or Sindh.

When Duleep Singh signed the treaties of Bhyrowal and Lahore, he was just a lad of nine and twelve years and did not really know what he was doing. Dalhousie's Lahore Treaty of 1849 ensured that Duleep Singh would be 'treated with respect and honour.' In Indian history perhaps no ruler has been treated so mercilessly and so shabbily and so brutally as this innocent child; Duleep Singh. What was his fault! What wrong had he



done? In fact, the British Government as his guardian dishonoured its own commitments by not quelling Mool Raj's Multan rebellion. One could go further and say that the British 'protected' their ward by taking his whole property and reducing him to a zero.

Duleep Singh was immediately removed from his mother when he was eleven. The British did not wish to take any chances. They feared that the young Maharaja might become a focus for rallying the turbulent, disgruntled and disaffected elements in the Punjab and offer a threat to their authority. They could not forget how in the First Sikh War despite treachery from within, the Khalsa army had shown its mettle, fire and power, making thereby the British position utterly precarious.

At 12 Duleep Singh embraced Christianity and at 14 he was baptized. He was first Indian ruler to become a Christian. Dalhousie's and Sir John Login's correspondence creates the impression that the entire initiative for turning a Christian came from Duleep Singh himself. Though Sir John Login was kind and friendly to Duleep Singh so long as he lived, his account of the latter's conversion to Christianity is questionable. I am inclined to hold the view that it was the deliberate and well-planned British policy to demolish the identity of Duleep Singh and to make him faceless in the eyes of his co-religionists and countrymen so that they should give him up as an odd man out who had abjured his faith.

Who would accept that a 12 year lad could on his own take an independent decision like conversion to Christianity. I think the view that Duleep Singh himself decided to leave his country and settle in England is as fallacious as the view that he turned to Christianity for seeking bliss and peace. It is necessary therefore to deconstruct the versions of Dalhousie, Henry Lawrence and Sir John Login on this matter to arrive at truth.

It is quite obvious that the British did not take any special interest in Duleep Singh's education, though they preferred doing



so. He did not join any public school like Eton or Harrow nor was he sent to Oxford or Cambridge for the fear of developing his mind. He greatly relished his association with the British aristocracy. He had an access to the royalty, particularly to Queen Victoria who provided apparently a substitute mother figure giving him a sense of security. There is no evidence to suggest that he had any interest in literary accomplishments. Nor did he have any enduring friendship except, of course, with Sir John Login who had served as his guardian. A widely-travelled man, his passions were fencing hawking, hunting and shooting.

When Duleep Singh realized that his own legitimate interests were not recognized in accordance with the Treaty of Lahore which ought to have been honoured, it opened his eyes and he committed himself to Indian nationalism. *There is a romantic aura about Duleep Singh and he continues to haunt our imagination. He is one of the lost leaders who stimulates speculations on the 'might have beens' in Punjab history and who could have altered the destiny of Punjab. It was the utter helplessness of his position which eroded his plans. He imagined far more than he could possibly achieve.*

Duleep Singh wore many masks. He was not allowed to go to his country and his entry into Punjab of which he was the sovereign was banned. His property was siezed. Homeless, he shuttled from one place to another; his religious faith taken and all this for no fault of his own. A straight forward man; he knew not how to manipulate or maneuver. According to Dr. Ganda Singh, his second wife was planted on him as an English spy. A lonely broken man he died in Paris. On his terrible plight 'The Tribune' wrote; 'Our Duleep Singh, your country can only weep for you!'





## IV

## MAHARAJA DULEEP SINGH : THE RELENTLESS CRUSADER

*Avtar Singh Gill*

Prince Duleep Singh, the youngest of the seven sons of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was born in the Lahore Palace on September 4, 1838. A very lovable, intelligent and handsome boy, he ascended the throne of Lahore in September 1843 at the tender age of 5 years. Rani Jindan his mother became the Regent as was the tradition in the family.

Suddenly, in December 1845, the British provoked the Sikhs by annexing the territories of Lahore Darbar on the left bank of the Sutlej. The first Anglo-Sikh War that ensued ended with the signing of Treaties of Lahore March 9, 1846 and March 11, 1846. The treaties deprived the Maharaja of the fertile Jalandhar Doab, the hills of Jammu & the valley of Kashmir. The Treaty of Bharowal, December 16, 1846, forced upon the Sikhs in connivance with the opportunist courtiers, gave the British Resident at Lahore full authority to direct and control all matters in every department of the State, the Council of Regency remaining a body of puppets and dummies. The British became the sole guardian of the person and properties of the child Maharaja. Subsequently, the traitors of the Darbar got shamelessly elevated to high positions and conspired to separate the Queen mother, Rani Jindan from her son and banish her from the kingdom. These events rightly gave the people an inkling of the

things to come. Chattar Singh Attariwala, Governor of Hazara, was not allowed to marry his daughter, Bibi Tej Kaur to the Maharaja. The patriotic & loyal chiefs like Mool Raj, Sher Singh & Chattar Singh, the Attariwala Sardars fought unsuccessfully to save the tottering Sikh kingdom.

The final transaction was made on March 29, 1849 at 2.00 P.M. when the Lahore Darbar was held for the last time simply to announce the decision of the Governor General to the Maharaja and his People. Maharaja Duleep Singh was conducted to a seat at the end of the Hall of Audience (being the last time he occupied the seat). The silence of the dead in the Hall told enough of the coming event. The Proclamation of the Annexation of the Punjab was read aloud in English and latter in Persian and Hindustani. The Fatal Edict was then handed in duplicate, by Misr Tej Singh, to the eleven years old frightened Maharaja who immediately affixed his signatures by tracing the initials of his name in English letters. After reading aloud the Proclamation in the native language, a copy thereof was handed over to the deposed Maharaja of the Punjab. This act finally transformed the Sovereign state of the Punjab into a British province and its ruler Duleep Singh, became a ward of the British.

After annexation of the Sikh kingdom to British Indian Empire, the conquerors now got engaged into executing their plan of removing the young deposed Maharaja first out of Punjab and then from India. Hankering after Jagirs, Titles and Prizes promised by the new rulers, none of the Chiefs and Sardars owing allegiance to the late Maharaja Ranjit Singh, cared for the future of his youngest son. As a first step, John Login was installed on April 6, 1849, as the Governor of the Lahore Fort with all its inmates & properties therein, the political prisoners, harems of the late Maharaja. the *Toshakhana* or Treasury, including the *Kalgi* of Guru Gobind Singh, the swords of persian hero Rustam, Holkar and Wazir Fateh Khan, the sacred relics of the prophet,



the celebrated *KOH-I-NOOR* and the wedding garments of Sardar Mahan Singh Sukkarchakia.

The young Maharaja was then kept away from the company of the Sikh Sardars, Chiefs, his relatives and the Sikh Priests. Forcibly separated from his Mother a few years ago, he was calculatedly tutored to develop a disliking and hatred for his co-religionists and his countrymen.

On December 21, 1849, Friday at 9.00 A.M. the last Maharaja of the Punjab, with his little nephew, Prince Shivdev Singh son of late Maharaja Sher Singh, was made to leave the citadel wherefrom he and his predecessors had ruled the great kingdom of the Punjab. It was really a pathetic scene, when the large concourse of the residents of Lahore assembled in front of the historic Fort, dumbfounded, shedding tears at the departure of their last Maharaja. There was tumult but no uprising since the voice of the Punjabis was fully silenced by letting loose the reign of terror. Two small guns were to accompany the party to guard against any attempt on the part of Bhai Mahraj Singh, a revolutionary at large, or his lieutenants to rescue the Maharaja on the way. The Cavalcade passed through villages Kahna Kachha, Lulliani, Ferozepur (Dec. 26), Mudki (Dec. 27) Bagha Purana (Dec. 28), Badhni (Dec. 31), Bassian (Jan. 1, 1850), Lohat Baddi (Jan. 2), Malerkotla (Jan. 3), Amargarh (Jan. 5), Khote (Jan. 6), Patiala (Jan. 7), Ghanaur (Jan. 8), Ambala (Jan. 11), Mulana (Jan. 16), Mustfabad (Jan. 17), Buria (Jan. 18), Chilkana (Jan. 19), Saharanpur, Muzzaffarnagar (Jan. 21), Meerut (Jan. 26) and ultimately reached Fatehgarh on February 16, 1850. On the way, among others, as per orders issued by the Resident's Agent; Elliot, the Maharaja was to remain inside Tent No.1, guarded by a British sentry; during day-time, two sentries were to take special care that the Maharaja does not move out of the enclosure and if he attempted to leave it, he was to be forthwith stopped from doing so. Each night, at the time of retiring to bed, Tent No.1 of the



Maharaja was to be dismantled and his bedding shifted close to that of John Login; one armed and one plain-clothed British sentries were to constantly keep a watch over the bedding of Maharaja, each hour changing a sentry during the night. The journey from Lahore to Ferozepur was to be completed in great haste without halt, and beyond that, there was a halt for rest on the way on each Sunday, and lastly the Maharaja was to travel during day time only, half of it in a chariot or cart, but always surrounded by a strong guard on horse, fully armed. The cavalcade was accompanied by only twenty of the body guards without an officer and the circulars were sent to the Deputy Commissioners of Ferozepur, Ludhiana and Ambala asking them to pay every respect to the Maharaja; but visits, public ceremonies and salutes of courtesy were prohibited.

Christians, both native and British, surrounded the young Maharaja for several years and no Sikh priest was allowed near him. Lord and Lady Dalhousie also arrived in Fatehgarh on X-mas day. The young Maharaja was lured into a trap and quietly baptised on March 8, 1853. The Sikhs were informed that the Maharaja was no longer a Sikh and they should never think of his return to the Sikh faith or the Punjab. After four years stay at Fatehgarh, the Maharaja was sent to England on April 18, 1854. At the time of departure the Maharaja was wearing a semi-European style of dress; which consisted of the silk embroidered *Kurta* or Kashmiri tunic and over that a single-breasted velvet coat, richly embroidered down the seams. In his Sikh turban was a bejewelled aigrette, three rows of large pearls were worn round his neck; and a pair of large emerald-and-pearl ear rings. Arriving and settling in England, he only wore his complete national (Sikh) costume, with all its splendid jewels, when he went to court or at any gathering; but after a few years, he fully adopted the English dress for all occasions. The Court of Directors accorded the deposed Maharaja of a war-like nation a friendly welcome. Queen



Victoria gave him a special audience and, regarding his rank, he was authorised to take precedence only next to the royal family.

Rani Jindan, the mother of the Maharaja was still struggling to fight back the British. She was first held in the fort of Sheikhpura, then sent to Benares. Scared of her potential to make things hot even from Benares, she was transferred to the notorious fort of Chunar from where she escaped and reached Khatmandu (Nepal), after traversing marshy lands, thick forests infested with robbers and beasts and circuitous route, on April 29, 1849, Sunday, where she was assigned a house at Thapathali near the Prime Minister's house, on the bank of Bagmati river, with sufficient allowance for maintenance. After having learnt about the annexation of the Punjab, she was anxious to know the fate of her son and the British designs as to his future. The British Resident in Nepal informed the Rani that the Maharaja was safe and adequate pension had been sanctioned for him. Her request to reside with her son, who was still a minor, was turned down.

Rani Jindan then learnt that her son has been removed to England but it was very difficult for her to contact him there. She managed to get in touch with him through her agents at Patna and Amritsar. Correspondence between mother and son continued for some time till it became known in 1856 when an Urdu paper, namely KOH-I-NOOR, published this item in its issue dated April 1, 1856. A letter of the son addressed to his mother also fell into the hands of the British Resident at Khatmandu, in which the Maharaja showed his inability to assist her to come to England through his efforts and advised her to seek the aid of Rana Jang Bahadur the Nepalese Prime Minister, but warning her: 'Whatever you do, do very cautiously and without getting me into any trouble'. The letter, being in English, the Rani handed it over to the Rana for translation from some English-knowing gentleman of the British Embassy and, accordingly, this letter fell into the hands of the British Resident who reported the matter to his



Government on August 28, 1856, saying that the intention of the Rani was to leave Nepal for England to join her son and then to fight her case for the restoration of her personal property and Jagirs. By then, the policies of the Government of India had undergone a change. Lord Canning wrote to the Court of Directors of the East India Company for orders permitting the Rani to contact her son openly. In those very days, the Maharaja commissioned Pandit Nahemiah, a Convert to Christianity who had been sent to England with the Maharaja for three years as his tutor, to make the journey to Khatmandu to find out as to how the Rani was conducting herself there. Unfortunately, the Pandit bungled in the matter and sent the Rani the letter through a native banker visiting Nepal on business and this came to the notice of the Governor General. Consequently the Pandit was forbidden to open communication with Rani Jindan except through the British Resident. In the meantime, the mutiny of 1857 broke out and this again aroused the Rani to fight back the British.

The Rani's former servants, Chet Singh and Jawala Singh Kahars of Singhpura (Amritsar) and Mayya Kahar of Malla (Gurdaspur) had been carrying her messages to the people of Punjab and the state prisoners confined in Allahabad. Richard Temple, commissioner of Lahore, also came to know about Megh Singh and Kishan Singh of Gurdaspur District visiting the Maharani in Nepal and using 'seditious' language against the British Government. In 1859, Chet Singh and Jawala Singh were arrested and it led to large scale arrests and arbitrary punishment of many people in the Punjab. These events convinced the British authorities that the only way to get rid of Rani Jindan, was to allow her to meet Duleep Singh. It was also decided to release her frozen assets, a long controversy on this issue between Dalhousie, the Attorney General of India and Court of Directors notwithstanding. The Governor General, therefore, instructed Lt. Col. Ramsy, British Resident in Khatmandu, to permit Rani



Jindan to proceed to Calcutta where her son would come and see her.

On the other hand, the Maharaja was also longing to come to India to see his mother and also for a tiger-shoot. He was also eager to negotiate with the Government for his future residence somewhere in British Indian territories. The Maharaja, to be on the safe side, enclosed a letter for his mother, in the letter of his tutor sent to Browning, private secretary to Earl Canning, with a request to forward the same to the British Resident at Khatmandu to safely deliver it into the Rani's own hands. The compliance report in this respect was sent by Browning from camp Panipat where the Governor General was then camping, to John Login on January 8, 1860. In early 1861, the Maharaja arrived at Calcutta and stayed in Spencer's Hotel where Kanwar Shivdev Singh, his nephew who had been left behind in India, joined him. His old servant and many other people were there to welcome him back. His mother had not yet arrived at Calcutta. She was at Rani Ganj; The son and the mother met there. A house outside the city of Calcutta was arranged for the Rani but she refused to live separately from her son.

The Chinese War had just ended when the Maharaja landed at Calcutta and many of the Sikh regiments were returning home. A word passed around the troop-ships, as they entered the Hoogly, that the deposed Maharaja Duleep Singh, a son of late Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was in the city. The men in olive green flocked to Spencer's Hotel, in thousands and virtually besieged it. They were very demonstrative in their joy and greetings to their former ruler and though perfectly amenable to discipline, their excitement alarmed the officials and consequently Lord Canning requested the Maharaja, as a favour to the Government, to give up his intention of going up country, and to return to England. Although the Maharaja had come to India at a great expense in preparing for a season's sport, having brought with him an Indian-

Rubber boat and a swivel duck-gun, besides all the latest inventions in rifles etc. for tiger shooting, he agreed to depart gracefully and with a heavy heart, took passage for himself and his near-blind mother in the first available steamer for England. "It was indeed a great sacrifice to ask, but the young deposed sovereign accepted it chivalrously and without a murmur", wrote E. Dalhousie Login, in Lady Login's Recollections.

On voyage, the Maharaja wrote to his erstwhile tutor and guardian to secure a house for his mother in London, close to Lancaster Gate where he was then living, Login took a large empty house, next-door but one to his "No.1, round-the-corner", as it was called at that time. After a few days, lady Login had her first interview with the woman who, at one time, was much admired and feared personality of the Indian sub-continent. The stories told in those days of her beauty and fascination as well as her talent for diplomacy and strength of will, were almost as universal as those related in the later years of the great Dowager-Empress of China. Lady Login had heard of her from the Maharaja himself, Rani Dakhno (widow of Maharaja Sher Singh) and her relations, Maharaja's own attendants and ministers, Lawrence brothers and other British officers and civilians who, with their wives, had seen her in Lahore. Rani Jindan was truly an object of commiseration when one considered her plight with her former state. Lady Login described her feeling on meeting her thus. "The moment she grew interested and excited in a subject, unexpected gleams and glimpses, through the haze of indifference, and the torpor of advancing years, revealed the shrewd and plotting brain of hers who had once been known as "the Messalina of the Punjab" .

Rani Jindan never felt happy in England and the Maharaja had also seen much of the British. The Rani was living in Malgrove Castle which the Maharaja had taken on lease from its owner. Till June 1862, they lived there. And then the Maharaja



took a separate house for her in London, placing her under the charge of an English Lady. The presence of the Rani with her son was not liked by the British as she was likely to arouse filial feeling in the heart of her son. She was already praising the Sikh religion and the Maharaja was showing signs of drifting away from his new faith; forced upon him in his childhood. Lady Login wrote, 'the Maharaja's religious feelings were at this time in an unsettled and emotional condition, attracted by the most extravagant and ignorant forms of sectarianism, so that no one ever knew from day to day what fresh idea he might be pursuing', and Col. B.C. Phillips also wrote to John Login in England "it is a misfortune, though it is impossible to oppose his filial wish."

On August 1, 1861, the Maharaja wrote to John Login from Achlyne, to immediately request permission from the Indian authorities for his return to that country, with his mother, giving up all his pension and emoluments, and taking only a Jagir in Dehra Dun to spend the rest of his life. Lady Login, opening this letter at Llandulas in Wales, wrote back, begging him to take time and thought before embarking on such a serious step or even speaking of it openly, and Col. Oliphant also gave him the same advice. After much thought, the Maharaja changed his mind and decided to arrange for his mother's return to India. Rani Jindan, with health broken, was also counting the number of her last days, of course desiring to breathe her last in her own country. She vainly waited for the decision of the Government of India and, lying ill in Abingdon House, Kensington. On the early morning of August 1, 1863, at the age of 46, Jindan, once the Maharani of the Sikh Kingdom of Lahore and a force to be reckoned with, with dim eyesight, broken health and beauty vanished, left for her heavenly abode in the country of the enemy; as a virtual prisoner. The Maharaja, now really orphan, cried and wailed for the irreparable loss. The dead body was placed temporarily in an unconsecrated vault in Kensal Green Cemetery



until such time as measures could be taken for its transportation to India for the funeral according to her religious rites. The Maharaja overtaken with grief was pained to witness, what was being done. The Maharaja carried the dead body of his mother to India for the last rites according to the Sikh religion, but not before assuring the Government that he would never think, that he or his father was once the ruler of the Sikh Kingdom, or that Rani Jindan was the Maharani of the Punjab or that the people of the Punjab were ever his subjects. This was too much for the 25 year old Maharaja but he did not raise his little finger against this command. The body of Rani Jindan, landed at Bombay, under the superintendence of her Punjabi servants, underwent the ceremonial burning at Nasik, far away from Punjab and in due course, the ashes collected were conveyed to, and scattered on the waters of Godawari. A small monument in the river bed was subsequently raised there underneath which the remains were deposited.\* Not allowed to visit Punjab and staying for about a month in the city of Bombay, as State Prisoner, the Maharaja, under orders, staged a retreat to England.

It will be only fair to concede that nationalist sentiments were aroused in Maharaja Duleep Singh by John Bright, a politician in 1859, when he heard his discourse in Rome on 'the wrongs of the unhappy natives under British domination'. It was then that he thought of meeting his mother, and bringing her to England. The redoubtable Ranis' short association was enough to remind him of his glorious heritage and he gave an assurance to his mother that he would re-embrace Sikhism at an appropriate time. In 1869, the Maharaja openly confessed to an American friend of his that 'he had a strong desire to rule the Punjab, and he was determined to

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\* The remains of Rani Jindan were dug out from the river side by a grand daughter of Rani Jindan and were interned in the Samadhi of Maharaja Ranjit Singh at Lahore. Sardar Harbans Singh Attariwala offered the 'Ardas' (prayers). This happened on March 2, 1924, Kahn Singh, Gurshabad Ratnakar, p. 523, (reprint), Languages Deptt. Punjab. Patiala, 1974 - Editor.



go to India even if he must go by way of Russia'. In those days, barring the few Sardars who enjoyed favours of the British, every Sikh heart had a desire well enshrined in mind to get back their independence lost in the year 1849 and looked back nostalgically to the good old days of the *Khalsa Raj*. The Kuka movement was the outcome of that desire and in 1869, Gurcharan Singh Kuka was negotiating for Russian assistance with the Governor of Tashkant, in the name of the Kuka chief, Baba Ram Singh of village Bhaini Sahib (Ludhiana District). The Kukas, in fact, believed ardently about return of Maharaja Duleep Singh to power as prophesied in the '*Sau Sakhi*' (attributed to Guru Gobind Singh) then current in Punjab: According to one of the '*sakhis*', Kuka Bishan Singh Arora, a wealthy merchant of Kabul, with business centres in Peshawar, Bokhara and Russia, was destined to lead a Mohammedan army of liberation across the North-Western Frontier of India into the Punjab. Besides, some Indian princes were also engaged in obtaining Russian help against the British. In 1862, the ruler of Indore and in 1867, the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir had sent their emissaries to the Governor of Tashkant for the purpose, and the Maharaja was not unaware about all these developments in India. In reality, the ferment created by the Kukas was intensified by the 'rebellious' attitude of the Maharaja during the same period. In 1882, the Maharaja had sought permission to visit the Punjab for the ostensible purpose of collecting necessary information about his ancestral jagirs but the British official circles in India, piqued over the proposal, recommended that the Maharaja should not be permitted to enter India. The intelligence about the proposed visit of the Sikh Maharaja to India also caught the imagination of the nationalists in the country and the nationalist forces in Bengal circulated large number of secret pamphlets in the various towns and cities of the Punjab, with an appeal for rallying under the banner of Maharaja Duleep Singh. According to Foreign Deptt. Secret-I Prog., December 1883, Nos. 8-17, those pamphlets bore the slogan '*Maharaja Duleep Singh ki jai*'.



There was also a great ferment in the country caused by the passing of the Vernacular Press Act, the Arms Act of 1878, and the Afghan War. Consequently the British Government, turned down the request of the Maharaja to visit any part of India, allowing, however, Sardar Thakur Singh Sandhawalia (of Raja Sansi) to contact the Maharaja in England and post him with all the facts about his Jagirs, if any. The Sandhawalia Sardar had been an Extra Assistant Commissioner in 1865, but was appointed the Manager of the estate of Bakhshish Singh (his own minor son having been adopted by his cousin, Shamsheer Singh - great grand father of late Major Harinder Singh of Raja Sansi) and was invested with Magisterial powers within the limits of Raja Sansi. Those powers were withdrawn in 1877 and he rejoined the Punjab Commission. He was, however, not happy with the British and was glad to get the opportunity of seeing the Maharaja, who happened to be one of his kin. Thakur Singh was decidedly 'a man of some light and leading among the Sikhs'.

On August 23, 1884, the Maharaja announced his departure for India, as he could not otherwise undergo all the necessary rites of re-initiation as a Sikh. He had sounded Lady Login, about a fortnight back that 'a great storm was gathering in India, and he trusted to render such 'services' as would compel the British nation to recognise his claims. His mother told him of the prophecy that he was to return to India to lead the Sikhs. This country (England) was going to the dogs. It was difficult to discern whether he had grounds for his assertion at that date, that 'the advance of Russia is behind with intense joy in the secret hearts of the Princes of India', and that it was a matter of only a few years (say thirty) before the British Raj would be in the throes of dissolution; what a nearer truth prophecy; in sixty years, in 1947, the British were forced to quit not only Punjab but the whole of the Indian sub-continent.

The Maharaja was now in correspondence with his relations



in India. Sardar Thakur Singh Sandhawalia (cousin of the Maharaja), the sole surviving son of Sardar Lehna Singh, Sandhawalia, kicked his civil gazetted post and went to England, in 1885, to bring back the Maharaja, and stayed with him for about nine months. Sardar Sant Singh, a brother-in-law of Rani Jindan, also took pleasure in offering his services, but the Maharaja wrote back.

“ELEVEDEN HALL  
THETFORD  
SUFFOLK.

My dear Sardar Sant Singh,

I am very pleased to receive your letter. I thank you very much for offering me your kind services but there is nothing that I require. As the British Government refuse to do me justice, therefore, I shall leave England on the 16th of December next and take up my residence quietly at Delhi for I am poor now.

I am very pleased to find in you a relative of my dear late mother. As you are aware by this time that I have rejoined the faith of my ancestors, I salute you with Wah Gooroo Je Dee Futeh and remain,

Yours affectionate relative

Oct. 7<sup>th</sup>, 1885

DULEEP SINGH

The Maharaja could not leave for India in December 1885, as the British Government did not permit him to proceed and live anywhere near the Punjab, or even at any other place north of Allahbad. Now they proposed to allow him to reside in the extreme south, at Ootacomand. Anxious enquiries from India were continuously made, and the Maharaja again wrote:

“CARLTON CULB  
PALL MALL. S.W.

My dear Sardar Jee,

Wahe Gooroo Jee Dee Fatteh,

I am very pleased to receive your letter, but I advise you not

to come near me without permission of Government as you might get into trouble with the authorities.

I intend to leave England with my family on the 31st. of this month, but it is possible a little longer delay may occur.

I need not tell you how pleased I shall be (if the Government permits) for you to be present at my receiving 'Powl' (Pahul, the Khalsa Initiation) which I trust my cousin Thakur Singh Sandhawalia will administer to me.

I am now longing to return to India although Government are afraid to let me reside in the North-Western Provinces and desire me to live at Ootacamund but I put my faith entirely to Sutgooroo who now that I turn to him for forgiveness I know not forsake me.

Yours Sincere friend and well wisher

DULEEP SINGH

March 9<sup>th</sup>, 1886

MAHARAJAH

About a fortnight later, the Maharaja wrote to his countrymen for bestowing forgiveness on their "erring creature." The letter was published in the TRIBUNE, Lahore, in the issue dated April 17, 1886.

There was again a great stir in British circles and under the instructions from the Government, the Sikh Sardars, whose ancestors had flourished on account of the favours bestowed on them by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, shamelessly 'disowned' their own "flesh and blood."

Sardar Thakur Singh Sandhawalia played a significant part in preparing the Maharaja for a struggle with the British. He presented a copy of the '*Sakhis*' to the Maharaja and obtained the permission of the High Priests of the Golden Temple, Amritsar, for his reconversion to Sikhism. Various plans were prepared for establishing Maharaja's contacts with the people and princes of the Punjab. Baba Khem Singh Bedi, the direct



descendant of Guru Nanak Dev ji, was also in direct communication with the Maharaja and Sandhawalia's personal servants and adherents, namely, Jawahar Singh, Anup Singh, Arur Singh, Sohan Lal and Banarsi Dass took prominent part in the affairs during the following years. A brave Punjabi displayed great courage in sending a reply to the Maharaja's letter, addressed to his countrymen on March 25. 1886.

"Dear Maharaj,

When I got the intelligence about your abandoning England and settling in India, and re-embracing the Sikh religion; I felt greatly elated. Not only of the Punjab, but also the residents of India were shedding tears for doing injustice to you. The whole of India is waiting for you and the heart of each person was full of sympathy with you for the grave injustice done to you, but of what use is mere sympathy? We shall be very much pleased to find you amongst us again. If the government stands in your way, you should not worry; sympathy and true love of the Indians will grant peace of mind to you. You have remembered us as your countrymen and friend; how fortunate we are to hear this! Your countrymen are waiting for you, but your countrymen strongly suspect that the government might not stand in your way.

Your Most Sincerely

"A Punjabi brother"

No sooner this letter was published, there were brisk activities, in official circles in India. People in general busied themselves in giving a grand welcome to their Maharaja and enthusiasm among troops was also visible. The Military Department wrote to the Adjutant General to ascertain the feelings of the Punjab troops with regard to the Maharaja's visit and the Commander-in-chief wrote to the viceroy:

*"Curiously enough this morning post received a communication from General Dhillon the subject of your Excellency's note of*



*today. I send letter with its enclosures. I do not believe that there is any general dissatisfaction in the Punjab but I always thought that the return or even the threatened return of Duleep Singh to India would raise hopes of a revival of power amongst certain sections of the Sikhs and his presence with a Russian force in Afghanistan might cause some trouble with our Sikh soldiers."*

He again wrote to Lord North-Brook that "Duleep Singh's proposed visit to India has caused some excitement among the restless spirits of the Punjab...." The political situation in Europe and the Middle-East was no less favourable. The Irish nationalists were sympathetically disposed towards the Maharaja and an Irish Finian, a retired Major from the British army, having joined him for this purpose. France and Germany were creating trouble in Egypt and Turkey against the Britishers through Islamite League and the Wahabis. In India, upper class Mohammedans, with the backing of influential persons like the Begum of Bhopal and her husband, Nawab Sadiq Hussian, had come under the influence of these movements. It was in these circumstances, that the Maharaja made arrangements to bid good-bye to the country of his naturalisation and finally settle in India. He shifted to the Great Eastern Hotel in Liverpool Street, in order to quit England the next morning. A last attempt was then made to tempt him to stay back in England and abandon the very idea of going to India. It was only when all arrangements were made, and the Peninsular and Oriental Liner (Verona), was on the point of sailing from southampton, that he received on board a visit from colonel Owen Burne, on behalf of the Secretary of state for India, and was offered a bribe of half a lakh pounds sterling, if he would remain in England. He spurned the offer of a bribe and displayed his determination to sail for India, with all the members of his family, discarding all that he owned or possessed in England, to live in a dignified way amongst his countrymen. His last telegrams were to S. Thakur Singh Sandhawalia and three others: "Started."



The messages were intercepted by the Indian authorities and all the four addressees were put under close observation. As back as in February 1886, Col. Hennessy, commanding the 15th Sikhs, informed the Government: "... The spirit of the Sikhs is not dead and they are full of national fire. I should tremble in my shoes were that gentleman (Maharaja Duleep Singh) to arrive at our borders with the Russians. The British Government should hold him fast secure in England in my opinion."

The Maharaja and his family with a Sikh attendant, a native servant, a European nurse and an *Aya*, arrived at Aden, within the territorial jurisdiction of the Governor General of India on April 21, 1886, where he was then arrested under Regulation III of 1818 under orders of the Government of India. He addressed a letter to THE TIMES OF INDIA:

*"I was arrested at Aden without a warrant for arrest, and such a warrant was issued when I, while staying at Aden, had re-embraced Sikh religion."*

A strong police force guarded his movements and he and his family members were refrained from going to India by orders of Lord Dufferin. He sent telegraphic petitions to Queen Victoria and the Viceroy of India for intervention but no reply was given; Rather he was forcibly removed to England.

Furious at the insults heaped on him, the Maharaja threw in the face of the Government the pension he had hitherto drawn, left his wife and family in their hands to support, abjured his sword and offered his services to other foreign powers to achieve his goal, and renounced his intention of offering his allegiance. From that moment, the European Journals were filled with bombastic proclamations on his part, and accounts of interviews he vouchsafed to numerous reporters, unmindful of the consequences. Sardar Thakur Singh Sandhawalia was sent back to India, with instructions to move to Pondicherry, a French possession, and wage a war on the British to liberate his country.



The Sardar had four sons, namely Gurbachan Singh of the Punjab Civil Services, Bakshish Singh, Gurdit Singh and Narinder Singh. Bakshish Singh was adopted by Shamsheer Singh Sandhawalia. He chose to accept the jagirs from the British and flourish as a protege of the Government. Major Harjinder Singh (one time a congress minister in Punjab) was his grandson. Gurbachan Singh, Assistant Commissioner in the Punjab, resigned his post to put his lot with his two brothers, Gurdit Singh and Narinder Singh, and his father, Sardar Thakur Singh Sandhawalia, and in 1886, they all fled Punjab and settled in Pondicherry. The Maharaja had already given up his English citizenship and had set up his headquarters in Paris from where he announced the formation of an emigre government at Pondicherry, with Sardar Thakur Singh Sandhawalia as the Prime Minister. The latter established secret liaison with Sikh regiments serving under the British asking them not to fight with the Maharaja but to desert their regiments and join him at the time of his appearance. The rulers of Chamba, Faridkot, Nabha and Kishan Kaur, the Dowager Rani of Ballabgarh promised support. Nahar Singh son of the Rani of Ballabgarh, had been hanged during 1857 upheaval. Narinder Singh Sandhawalia, was adopted by the Ballabgarh family and, therefore, the interest of the Rani in the Maharaja. In Hyderabad, Raja Narinder Parkash was in constant touch with the Sandhawalia Sardar, while almost all the Sikhs of that region had pledged full support. Banarsi Dass Kuka proceeded to Nepal for the same purpose. Shashi Bhushan Mukherjee, then in exile in Pondicherry and running a paper, "The Beaver", and Kumar Inder Chander Singh of Calcutta had also not lagged behind in supporting the national cause.

It was planned that, at the time of the invasion of the Maharaja with Russian support, the entire populace of Punjab would rise and destroy all means of communication and transportation, like the bridges and railway lines, in the rear of



the British forces. While the Sikh soldiers in the British army would join the Maharaja, the Indian soldiers in the service of the states would flatly refuse to fight against him. When successful, the Maharaja intended to establish a national Government in India and this plan was spelt out, in a secret proclamation, issued by the Maharaja from Paris, on February 7, 1886. The proclamation opened with the remarks:

*"Courage, countrymen, courage. We your flesh and blood, tell you. Light up your bowed-down heads and by the help of the Almighty Aryavarta shall once more be free and the 'Rising Young India' shall enjoy both liberty and self-government..."*

He exhorted his countrymen to share with him, "the glory of liberating the mother country." To the Sikhs, he asked, "Prepare for the advent of their lawful sovereign" and to learn from the 'Sakhis' their "glorious destiny predicted by *Dasswan Padsha*." Besides, he addressed secret letters to the Dogra Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir and other Punjab Chiefs and Princes and then tried to reach Pondicherry with the help of the French Government, but the latter refused to embitter their relations with the British Government. From there, he moved to Berlin, in Germany, where he procured a fake passport to visit Russia, but on way to Russia, as the passport and the entire money that he was carrying, were "stolen" at the border, a telegraphic intimation was sent to the editor, *MOSCOW GAZETTE*, about his misfortune, and the Maharaja was safely taken to Moscow, where he arrived in April 1887. He contacted the Russian officials to seek their aid in his mission. Arur Singh alias Partap Singh, personal servant of the Sandhawalia Sardar, was sent to India with two letters, one for Raja of Indore and the other for the deposed Nawab of Oudh, Nawab Wajid Ali, with a separate general Appeal to all other Indian Princes to send assurances to the Czar of Russia with whose aid he was expected to deliver them from bondage. To the ex-king of Oudh, he wrote:



*"With great joy I announce to you that I have reached Russia, and hope through the mercy of God and with the aid of the Emperor of Russia soon to come to India and deliver your Majesty from the hands of the accursed English and replace you on your throne."*

Unfortunately, the Sandhawalia Sardar died suddenly in Pondicherry, in December, 1887 and, earlier on August 5, 1887, Arur Singh, the special emissary, was arrested at Calcutta which led to the arrest of almost all the agents of the Maharaja in India. but before that, the Maharaja's venture created so much enthusiasm in the Punjab that a local newspaper, *DHUMKETU*, published the following verses:

*"O wicked English men ! do you remember the insults which you have heaped on the lion (Duleep Singh); a lion about to make a trial of strength with another lion (British); China, Burma and Japan are free, why shall he (Duleep Singh) suffer so much agony; from a distance and with the fire of hope burning in his heart, he is roaring out, awake, ye Sikhs ! quit your beds and awake; have you forgotten your days of prosperity when this earth, its sky and mountains shook under your feet; have you forgotten the bright jewel; Koh-i-Noor, where has that diamond gone; to live in bondage is to live in hell; snap as under the cruel fetters of bondage."*

One Sheik Jamal-ud-din and Abdul Rasul had been engaged for propagating against the British not only in India and in the Middle-East but also introduced the Maharaja to the Russian officials, including Kat Koff, an official in the Russian Army, and the latter promised all help. Abdul Rasul even introduced him to the Muslims to grant him moral support for a good cause. The Maharaja felt encouraged and addressed a lengthy letter to the Czar of Russia that said:

*"... the princes of India when freed and if allowed to manage their affairs in their own way, would join together and pay a large tribute annually into the Russian Treasure. Although I am*



*authorised to name only £30 lakhs per annum, yet in my opinion, after the settling down of the country, they could easily pay between £80 lakhs and £1 crore"*

Lady Login felt disturbed about the Maharaja's state of mind and she urged him to return to England and seek the 'Queen's gracious clemency'. The Maharaja, in those days used to sign as "implacable foe of England." He would speak of 'even dying as a patriot'. He bitterly resented any reference to his former loyalty and devotion to the Queen of England, and her kindness to him. He even warned Lady Login to 'think no more of the Duleep Singh you once knew, for he is dead, and another liveth in his place. He remarked:

*"... It would be mockery on my part to address you as 'My dear Login', and sign myself; Your affectionate', simply because I would shoot down on the battlefield any of your relations without the slightest hesitation, as I would do any other Englishman! No, my Lady, I cannot sacrifice my honour for the sake of acquiring money ... and cannot subject myself to be placed between two stools; therefore, from this day forth, close all correspondence with your Ladyship. Once more, good bye! I remain your most obliged, Duleep Singh.*

The Maharaja made all-out efforts to get military and financial assistance from the Government of Russia, during his long stay there, but he failed in his attempts. He could not get a personal interview with Czar, although the Maharaja was encouraged by certain sections. An article was published in his favour in the *Moscow Gazettee*, dated 15-17 September 1887, giving a long account of how the Maharaja was cheated out of his kingdom and stated: 'We welcome him with the conviction that he will find among us all the sympathy which his fate demands.'

There were reasons for the failure of the Maharaja's mission. Firstly, Katkof, on whose personal influence and assurance the



Maharaja depended so much to dislodge the British from India, died soon after the Maharaja convinced him of his bonafides. Secondly, in the recent past, in Bulgaria and Afghanistan, the Russian policy received a rude shock. So the Foreign Minister of Russia was not in favour of such a venture, which involved a powerful country like England. Thirdly, the Maharaja overestimated his strength and the aid he would have received from Indian rulers. It was too much for the Maharaja to expect any help from the Dogra Maharaja of Jammu & Kashmir, (even though he was unhappy with the Paramount Power) in the face of the outburst of the Maharaja, in a letter addressed to the Dogra Chief:

*"I was young when the English took me away from my country, and the administration was left in the hands of your ancestors. They did not look to my interests and ruined the State. This was not a loyal act, but I have forgiven the past. For the future, I command that whatever S. Thakur Singh thinks, is best for myself and you, should be carried out. So shall the stain on your name be removed; otherwise no such opportunity will again occur."*

Lastly the sudden and untimely death of Sardar Thakur Singh Sandhawalia at Pondicherry and, the arrest of Arur Singh alias Partap Singh at Calcutta in August, 1887 altogether changed the position in India. Other agents of the Maharaja were soon apprehended and the Indian rulers were severely warned to behave and security measures were tightened. The Sikh Sardars and other Chiefs of the Punjab were pressurized, to publicly disown the Maharaja, which they did.

Thus disappointed, the Maharaja attempted to seek support from other countries opposed to the British. He deputed Abdul Rasul Kashmiri to France, Germany, Austria and Turkey. The first-mentioned three countries did not respond to the call on the plea that the Maharaja had no active support in his own country. However, the anti-British party led by Zobair Pasha, the Ex-Prime Minister of Sudan, and Ahmad Mukhtar Pasha, a Minister



of the Turkish Government, assured the Kashmiri emissary of their active and fruitful support to the Maharaja. assuring that they would close the Suez Canal as soon as there would be a rising in the Punjab. Even Sikandar Khan of Herat and Ali Khan, the Governor of Panjdeh, had shown keen interest in the plan.

The Maharaja lost his link with Abdul Rasul Kashmiri, and felt dejected and disappointed. He left Moscow from Kieff, and from there reached Paris. Even afterwards, while the Maharaja had already left Russia, parties of innocent Punjabis were found trekking their way to Russia in the vain hope of the Maharaja reconquering the Punjab, as contained in the '*Sakhis*'. Mahan Singh, Sawan Singh and Wadu Singh Kukas from Amritsar district had travelled, via Dera Ismail Khan and Gligit, to reach Tashkant in search of their Maharaja. A party from Jalandhar consisting of Sundar Singh, Sardool Singh and Baba Bandri, was spotted at Mash-had. Moti a forty-years old *Jhiwar* from Gurdaspur, was also on way to Russia for the same purpose, but he was also spotted at Mash-had. He chose to commit suicide.

The Maharaja had been staying in Grand Hotel, Paris, to spend his last days there. In early 1890, he was afflicted with a stroke of paralysis affecting his left side. On hearing this, his two elder sons rushed to Paris to be by his side and pleaded with him to return to England. Duleep Singh refused to listen to them as he did not wish to breath his last on the British soil.

After this, the Maharaja did not live long. He was in a most critical condition. Kidney trouble-dropsical symptoms-intense irritability of temper developed. On Saturday, October 21, 1893, night, he had an apoplectic fit. None of his surviving sons were with him when the end came. He died at Paris on the evening of October 22, 1893 - far away from his motherland, but was laid to rest in the Churchyard, opposite the house, at Elveden, where he had once hoped to make the home of his descendants. Beyond doubt, the crusader in him remained active till his end.

## V

# SOME INFLUENCES THAT SHAPED MAHARAJA DULEEP SINGH'S LIFE

*Gurcharan Singh*

From early childhood, young Duleep Singh had been told by all around him that he was the real sovereign of the Punjab and the British were there only to assist him. He, therefore, displayed kingly behaviour in all his dealings. Lady Login had recorded that he would sometimes refuse to act as desired by his Tutor; Dr. Sir John Login. According to her, when he ran out into the garden during a heavy downpour, he got thoroughly drenched, "Finding him in this condition Login wished him to change his clothes, but half in play, the boy said he would do so at the usual time, and when urged to change at once, he turned obstinate"<sup>1</sup>. In defence of his strange conduct he pleaded that the Treaty of Lahore, "stipulated that he was to be allowed to do as he liked."<sup>2</sup>

Prof. M. L. Ahluwalia and Dr. Kirpal Singh have quoted two more incidents in which the same spirit of independence was shown by Duleep Singh. It is mentioned that when he was being taken to Fatehgarh, he insisted on taking a dip in the Ganges near Hardwar. But the British officers accompanying him as escort refused permission. They had, however, to relent and he was allowed to take bath at Kankhal a few miles downstream.<sup>3</sup> The second related to his preference for Punjabi food.

Why Young Duleep Singh behaved so independently; was perhaps due to two causes. One that he was fully convinced that he was the real ruler of the Punjab and the British had deprived



him of his right by deceit. The second was the influence of his mother. Maharani Jind Kaur, who had repeatedly reminded him of his rights. It is mentioned by Lady Login that during his stay at Fatehgarh, at a spot called 'Fatehgarh Park', the Maharaja would be "seated in state on a couch or chair, with his attendants grouped about him. Each of the playmates on entering made low obeisance, then stood erect, with folded hands to his forehead, and gave vent to one word 'Maharaj' with the suddenness of a pistol shot. The salutation made on entering and on leaving the presence, the Maharaja receiving it, according to native ideas of kingly dignity without visible sign of acknowledgement.<sup>4</sup> Lady Login has also mentioned that some nobles and ministers who had accompanied "their sovereign into exile made their appearance in full dress to pay their respect..."<sup>5</sup>

Writing about young Maharaja's habits and character she says, "Everyone was struck with the young Sikh Sovereign's charm of manner; his geniality and love of truth and his straight forwardness was very unusual in an Oriental."<sup>6</sup>

From the above observation it becomes clear that young Duleep Singh took himself seriously as sovereign of Punjab imagining perhaps that he would soon be put back on the throne. He was highly talented and was fond of drawing and painting. "He was unusally well educated for an Indian prince of those days, reading and writing Persian very well, having already made some progress in England."<sup>7</sup> Another notable point is that he was a serious type of youngman. The British Resident on 18<sup>th</sup> November, 1848 issued aproclamation duly approved by Lord Dalhousie in which Mulraj and Others were described as rebels "against the Government of the Maharaja Duleep Singh" and that the British Army" had entered the Lahore territories not as an enemy to the constitutional Government, but to restore order and obedience. All who have remained faithful in their obedience to the Government of the Maharaja Duleep Singh .... have nothing

to fear from the coming of the British Army.” Because of the fact that he was always addressed as ‘Sir’ ‘Maharaja’ and referred to in communications as ‘Sovereign’, his later behaviour and claims to the throne become quite logical in the light of the British promises of loyalty and friendship with him.<sup>8</sup> In this connection it is important to mention in the words of Major Evens Bell, “Maharaja Duleep Singh did not in 1849 ... stand before the British Government as ‘an object of bounty’, but as the one who was in full and lawful possession of a sovereignty with whom “Terms” equivalent to a Treaty of territorial cession, were concluded which gave something like regularity and legality to what would otherwise have borne an aspect of naked lawlessness and to what was in fact, no ‘conquest’ but a violent breach of trust.”<sup>9</sup>

Thus the Maharaja seriously looked upon himself as a ruler who had been illegally deprived of his kingdom.

Another early influence on the mind of young boy was that of his mother. She was an inveterate enemy of the British who had very cleverly organised opposition to the British all over the Punjab of the nineteenth century. She has been eulogised by contemporary writers in such glowing terms as “Mother of the Khalsa”, “Messilina of Indian History” and compared to Mary Queen of Scots. Even Lord Dalhousie described her as “the only person having manly understanding in the Punjab.” Lord Ellenborough wrote to Duke of Wellington, “The mother of the boy Duleep Singh seems to be a woman of determined courage.”<sup>10</sup>

As is well known, Tej Singh had acted as a traitor during the first Anglo-Sikh War. The British decided to reward him with the title of ‘Raja’ on 17 August 1847, “On hearing this” according to M. L. Ahluwalia and Prof. Kirpal Singh, “the Maharani was infuriated and ordered her young son not to apply ‘tilak’ on the forehead of the renegade and the child acted as directed. This



gave the Resident the opportunity. He decided to banish the Rani from the Kingdom."<sup>11</sup>

Although the mother and son were separated in August 1847 and they could meet again only in April 1861 but the treatment meted out to his mother by the Britishers left a deep scar on his mind. "The only thing which she could do during that period was to remind her son of his duty to his country and his religion. The later life of Duleep Singh is sufficient indication of the success of the Maharani in converting her son into a true nationalist."<sup>12</sup>

In order to keep him away from native influences, the British adopted devices like converting him to Christianity in 1852 when he was just 14 and taking him away to England next year. They hoped that all this will wean him away from India and especially Sikhism.

In England, Queen Victoria and her consort treated him with much consideration hoping that this would also help him in forgetting his past. But extremely polite and intelligent as he was, he acted according to the expectations of his tutor and his wife. But it appears he never forgot the injustice that had been done to him by Dalhousie and others. Lady Login, "Although Duleep Singh to his credit appeared to prefer the plain-speaking of his friends to the flattery of unthinking people, he would not have been human if his head had not been sometimes turned by the adulation often lavished upon him by women of rank in English society. His character at that time was above reproach and though amiable in disposition, there was naturally still underlying all a strain of indolence and indifference to suffering which is innate in the oriental."<sup>13</sup>

Duleep Singh wrote on 9th December 1856 to the Directors of East India Company drawing their attention to the fact that since he had attained the age of maturity, satisfactory arrangements should be made for him and his descendants. Queen Victoria also supported him. The Queen wrote, "As we are in complete

possession since 1849 of the Maharaja's enormous and splendid kingdom, the Queen thinks to do everything to render the position of his rendering and not to let him have the feeling that he is a prisoner."<sup>14</sup>

He went to Italy for a holiday in 1856. On his return in May 1857 he found that the Board of Directors of East India Company had not attended to his ancestral property in India. He therefore, decided to leave for India in October, 1857. He had, however to change his plans due to outbreak of the Munity in June 1857. "For Duleep Singh it proved to be a time of trial and exposure. Those about him expected the bright example to react in public to express with some feeling words the principles of impartiality of the one who had been brought up on English bread, but they waited in vain. Lord Clarendon felt that the Maharaja was of an unfeeling and cruel disposition and said so. But Queen Victoria retorted by scoffing that it was hardly to be expected that he ... should pronounce an opinion on so painful a subject, attached as he is to his country, and naturally still possessing, with all his amiability and goodness, an Eastern nature."<sup>15</sup> "Login however, was disappointed over the Maharaja's attitude to the Mutiny. It was reported that he continued with his gaieties." The essential character of Duleep Singh lay bare. It must have cost Login a great personal effort to acknowledge and admit the failure of his protege who was so suddenly discovered to possess no heart. Was it, Login must have asked himself an inordinate passion for hawking with its indifference to suffering that had brought about this heartlessness, this barbarity in his Oriental character or was it, as Login hoped a conscientious Christian desire by Duleep Singh to be seen as he really was?"<sup>16</sup>

It appears Duleep Singh who was already feeling sore over the indifference shown to his claims, showed his anger by deliberately remaining silent. He also thought that the Mutiny was the beginning of the pronounced anti-British feeling among the Indians which he



could use to his own advantage. Already the anti-British campaign started by Bhai Maharaj Singh must have influenced him to start his efforts to re-establish himself in the Punjab.

The Kukas (Namdharis) were keen to win back the freedom of the Punjab that had been lost in 1849. They were particularly piqued by the activities of the Christian missionaries in the Punjab. In 1857 a society called 'Sant Khalsa' was established which had political aims besides social and religious reforms. It was in a way a continuation of the Khalsa bid to save their independence. It was in 1863 that the government became aware of the real aims of this movement. It was also about this time that Duleep Singh had begun to feel how he had been cheated by the British. It was in March 1869 that Kukas created serious riots in village Tharajwala in Ferozepur district. Another discovery was the military training of a batch of Kukas in the state of Jammu and Kashmir which was eventually to be raised into a Kuka Regiment by the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir. They were also establishing foreign contacts in countries like Nepal and Russia. As is well known the Kukas killed some butchers in Amritsar in June 1871 and one month later some at Raikot and Malaud in Ludhiana district and lastly at Malerkotla in January 1872. As many as 49 Kukas were blown from guns on 17th January 1872 and 16 others were hanged. The Kukas believed that Maharaja Duleep Singh was the reincarnation of Baba Ram Singh. "The Kukas have given out that the reason why the Government has prohibited Maharaja Duleep Singh from visiting the Punjab is that the spirit of Baba Ram Singh has entered into him." (Abstract of Political Intelligence, Punjab Police No. 18 dated 8th May 1886)<sup>17</sup>. According to Dr. Fauja Singh, "with the arrival of Maharaja Duleep Singh in Russia in 1887, the situation took a dramatic turn."<sup>18</sup> A book called 'Khursheed Khalsa' was published by Bawa Nihal Singh in 1886 in which the restoration of the Khalsa Raj under Maharaja Duleep



Singh was prophesied. The Maharaja remained in Russia till November 1888, where he declared himself as the "sovereign of the Sikh nation and proud implacable foe of England."

Thus the Kukas also deeply influenced the Maharaja's thinking against the British.

Sardar Thakur Singh Sandhawalia of Raja Sansi was a close relative of Duleep Singh. "It was he who opened correspondence with Duleep Singh and informed him that his ancestral property worth millions was wrongly confiscated in the year 1849 and that he should apply for its restoration. He further promised every assistance in furnishing documentary and any other evidence which might be required on for about 4 years and in 1884 he was asked by Duleep Singh to visit England and have consultations with him. S. Thakur Singh went to England accompanied by his two sons Narinder Singh, Hardit Singh (Gurdit Singh?) and three followers Jowala Singh, Sant Singh and Partap Singh. Before leaving for England, he contacted the priests of Amritsar, Patna Sahib, Anandpur Sahib and Hazur Sahib Nanded, in order to get promises from them to cooperate with him for the restoration of Maharaja Duleep Singh on the Punjab throne. According to the Memo entitled, "Intrigues of Duleep Singh", after giving information about his ancestral property, Thakur Singh suggested to Duleep Singh that, instead of wasting his time in fruitless litigation, he should try to return to the Punjab and if he succeeded in it, he might rest assured that all the Sikhs were devoted to him, and in accordance with the prophesies contained in Guru Gobind Singh's '*Sakhs*' they were looking forward to a revolution and his restoration to the Punjab Raj<sup>19</sup>. This statement of Thakur Singh was received with suspicion by Duleep Singh, and he asked for some proof in its support. On this Thakur Singh wrote to his son, Gurbachan Singh, who obtained papers to that effect, sealed and signed by the principal Sikh priests and had them sent to his father. When these papers reached England, Duleep Singh was fully convinced of the truth of Thakur Singh's assertions and solidarity of the Sikhs to his cause.



"After this, under the guidance of Thakur Singh, he set to work to obtain the permission of Government for his return to his native land. On landing at Bombay the first thing that Thakur Singh did was to visit Hyderabad and open negotiations with the Decan Sikhs about the revival of Sikhism. From this place he went to Punjab and spread the news about the Maharaja's return and commenced making preparations for his reception."<sup>20</sup>

Thakur Singh on the suggestion of Duleep Singh reached Pondicherry on 6th November 1866. This was the preliminary step to join Duleep Singh in Europe later on. The French Governor of Pondicherry received him well and offered an allowance of 1000 Francs which however Thakur Singh declined to accept according to the instructions received from Duleep Singh. Duleep Singh remained in constant touch with Thakur Singh at Pondicherry through French Post office. In some of the letters Duleep Singh issued regular instructions about the task to be done for him from Pondicherry. In one of the letters Duleep Singh said that he was fully satisfied with his loyalty and fully believed that he was not doing it for love of money. In another communication, Duleep Singh asked him to send his agents to Nepal in order to persuade the ruler to remain neutral.

Thus Thakur Singh was mainly responsible in encouraging Duleep Singh to make a bid to re-establish his rule in the Punjab.

The policy of political extension including policies of escheat, annexation and doctrines of lapse combined with arrogance of the Company's officials, ill conceived agrarian 'reforms' and expropriation of some land-estates left behind the blazing trail of discontent and disaffection throughout the country. The educated persons were also ill-treated. People ascribed all their ills to the alien rule. Another factor was the activities of Christian missionaries. The repeated outbreak of famines was also ascribed to the mis-management and exploitation by the British.



Many Indian leaders like Raja Ram Mohan Roy took the cause of the Indians to the House of Commons in order to stop the extension of the Company's rule. In 1853 the Madras National Association sent a Petition to Parliament pressing for various reforms. Similarly the Bombay Association also pleaded against extending the Company's rule. Many liberal minded Englishmen like Sir Thomas Munro, Sir John Malcom and George Thompson also joined the Indians. The Wahabi movement which was very popular among the Indian Muslims aroused the Muslims against the British. The Hindus were also influenced by certain reform movements. Raja Ram Mohan Roy the founder of Brahmo Samaj, in the first half of the 19th century attempted to reform Hinduism by rationalising it on the basis of the old Hindu scriptures. On the political side also the Raja blazed the path of Constitutional agitation by advocating that the people of India had the same capabilities as any other civilised people in the world. Thus in the 1st half of the 19th century there was a simmering of national consciousness in the country but it had no platform. The revolt of 1857 provided the required leadership. Although the revolt was quelled but it helped generate a new feeling and urge for freedom. It however goes to the credit of Queen Victoria that in her famous Proclamation of 1858, she gave equal status to the Indians. Later on, the Viceroy, Lord Ripon also became sympathetic to the aspiration of the Indians. In England the Indian Association organised the first National Conference in which Anand Mohun Bose declared that the Conference was the first stage towards the national parliament. European scholars like Maxmuller, Monier Williams, Roth, Sassoon and Colebrooke helped the Indians to rediscover their own culture, civilization and herriage. The formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 was the next logical step. All these developments must have also impressed Maharaja Duleep Singh who was kept in touch with them after his visits to India in 1861 to 1863.



Maharaja Duleep Singh who was a man of high sensibilities, very straight forward and bold in approach, refused to be brow-beaten and exploited by the British and took courage to stake his all in regaining that was his due.

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## VI

## THE REFRACTORY GODSON

*Harish C. Sharma*

Duleep Singh, a boy of five was installed as Maharaja of the sovereign kingdom of Lahore in 1843 only to sign away all rights, titles and claims to the sovereignty of the Punjab six years later. His guardians believed, that he had every potential of being moulded into the form that they thought to be 'of good to him'. He was supposed to reside at such a place as the Governor-General of India may 'select' for him. He was taken out of Punjab and then sent away to England, He was converted to Christianity. Lord Dalhousie had described this event as 'remarkable and in every way gratifying'. After being taken to England, Queen Victoria took 'maternal interest' in him and wished that he 'be guided and kept as good and innocent as he is at present'. The present attempt is to analyze whether godson of his godmother, the queen, proved to be 'as good and innocent' as he was supposed to have remained.

The dispossessed Maharaja of the Punjab was promised a pension of not more than five lakhs of rupees per annum for his maintenance. All his private properties and belongings were either confiscated or were sold off. To be precise, he was, after the annexation of the Punjab, fully dependent upon the government of British East India company and subsequently the office of the Secretary of State for India, for all his needs. For bringing him up to majority, the Logins were made his guardians who exercised great deal of influence on the mind of the young Maharaja. It was under their guardianship supported by Bhajan Lal and others



that Duleep Singh was, insulated from any 'evil' influence which could cause any harm to the British interests. That was why he was taken to England. In England, he was treated extraordinarily by the Queen with whom he dined and breakfasted very often. It was considered a very great honour to be seated next to the Queen at dinner or at breakfast. Maharaja Duleep Singh had that 'privilege'. The Queen had become so fond of him that she drew the sketches of the Maharaja herself and got his portrait done by her favourite artist Winter halter. To this treatment Lord Dalhousie, reacted very sharply when he wrote to the controller of Queen's household; Sir George Couper on 24th, August 1854. "I am little afraid that exceeding distinction will not be good for his future comfort. If he is to live and die in England, well and good, but if he is return to India, he is not likely to be rendered more contented with his position there by being so highly treated in England; and after breakfasting with queens and princesses, I doubt his much liking the necessity of leaving his shoes at the door of Governor-General's room, when he is admitted to visit him, which he will certainly be again required to do. The 'night cappy' appearance of his turban is his strongest national feature. Do away with that...' From then onwards it would be observed that the successive Governor-Generals in India and the East India Company or the office of the Secretary of State for India had Dalhousie's remarks in their perspective while formulating policies for the dispossessed Maharaja of the Punjab.

The Queen, however, continued to show her affection and took interest in almost every sphere of activity of the Maharaja. Meanwhile the queen began to visualise Maharaja Duleep Singh's matrimonial life with her thirteen year old god-daughter Victoria Gouramma of Coorg. She was introduced to the Maharaja who was told also about the wishes of the 'Queen mother'. By then the Maharaja had come on his own and even showed signs of his free will, at least in his personal affairs. He declined the offer



of marriage between him and the young princes in 1856. This act of assertion by the Maharaja probably, had the greatest impact on his future career.

The other important development of the year 1856 was that the Maharaja began to ask for an account of his finances which were managed by the government. As has already been mentioned that under the terms of the Treaty of Lahore 1849, the Maharaja was to get an annual pension of not less than four lacs of rupees per annum. The salaries of his tutor and retainers as well as the expenses on the management of his household were to be paid out of his money. Till 1856, he had been getting money amounting to over one lakhs of rupees or £10,000 per year. The Maharaja in 1856 sought the payment of the arrears which stood to his credit. It was, however, in January 1859 that the allowance of the Maharaja was increased from £12,000 to £15,000. The settlement was described by the India office as permanent and to the satisfaction of all claims. The Maharaja was nonetheless not satisfied. He put forward his claim that his allowances be fixed at £35,000. The Queen also did intervene on behalf of the Maharaja, but the India office did not relent. The Maharaja incurred 'unhappiness' of the India office for not expressing his opinion during the uprising of 1857. The Maharaja seems to have been well aware of the events of 1857 and the 'indifference' shown on his part was not taken very kindly by the people among whom he moved and lived. Still he never gave his impressions.

By the end of 1859, he expressed his desire to visit India. The plan was responded to; with suspicion. The queen was not in favour of such a visit. It was perceived that Duleep Singh symbolized the sovereignty of the Punjab and he had the potential to become a strong rallying point of anti-British forces. Efforts were therefore, made to persuade him to abandon the idea. But he refused to accept any suggestions. The British, however, were firm that he would not be allowed to visit Punjab. The only concession allowed was the



permission for the mother and the son to live together. He met his mother after more than ten years of their separation. He landed at Calcutta in February 1861. He reacted to a question regarding his visit to the Punjab expressing his helplessness by saying 'The English government does not trust me' and when asked about this remark by Lord Canning, he retorted, 'If you do trust me, why do you not let me go wherever I like?' The rebel in the Maharaja was gradually coming to the fore.

The refractory behaviour of the Maharaja was, sufficiently reflected by the choice of his bride without taking either the Logins or the Queen mother into confidence which must have weighed very heavily in the formulation of attitudes in the India office.

It was, however, not until 1878 that Maharaja began to feel seriously about his financial difficulties. The property, that he had bought earlier at Gloucestershire had to be sold off at £1,83,000 and out of these proceeds he was settled at Elveden near Suffolk, at a cost of £1,05,000. For buying these properties the India office had raised a loan of £40,000 which had remained unpaid. The bankers in 1878 wrote to the Maharaja to return the loan. The Maharaja approached the India office with a request to this effect and also sought to settle his account on the basis of the terms of the Treaty of Lahore of 1849. His request was declined. Rather he was now accused of extravagance in a report submitted by William Sackville-West. Sackville-West had been appointed by Lord Cranbrook to look into the Eleveden estate. This frustrated the Maharaja very much. Furious over the charges of extravagance levelled against him, he went ahead to claim money from the government on account of the family jewels sold and his properties confiscated by the East India Company. This was just a beginning of a long series of correspondence between him and the queen and with the India office which further hardened the attitude of the people in government.

In the beginning of the 1880s the Maharaja had been



increasingly getting restless and justifiably so because neither the India office nor the government of India showed any inclination to accomodate him in any way. Finally he wrote to India office on 3rd February, 1881 that the Eleveden estate be sold and he was ready to shift to a smaller accomodation. In an another communication he demanded that if his kingdom could not be returned to him, he might be handed back some of his private estates or at least their cash equivalent. Lord Harlington who was looking after the affairs of the Maharaja did not change his attitude which ultimately led him to express his views in front of a wider audience. He chose 'The Times' to reach larger number of people. In his letter to the editor of 'The Times' he wrote, 'I the innocent who never lifted my little finger against the British government, was made to suffer in the same manner with my own subjects who would not acknowledge my authorities, ... What is unjust in my case is, that most of my servants who remained faithful to me were permitted to retain all their personal and private properties and to enjoy the rentals of their landed estates (or *jageers*) given to them by me and my predecessors; whereas I their master, who did not even lift my little finger against the British nation, was not considered worthy to be treated on the same footing of equality with them because, I suppose, my sin being that "*I happened to be the ward of a Christian power.*" He was undoubtedly sarcastic and angry when he wrote this letter.

Maharaja Duleep Singh possessed property worth more than 25 Lakh rupees which consisted of jewels, gold, silver, household furniture and even clothes. Except 200,000 rupees the rest was disposed off or was distributed among British officers and soldiers as loot money. Although he was promised an amount of maximum of 500,000 rupees and no less than 400,000 rupees, he was never paid more than 2,50,000 rupees. The British reaction was published by 'The Times' on 31, August 1882 which said that the Indian government had dealt with the Maharaja



generously. It further said that the Maharaja has done his best to become an English squire, and if he has lived beyond his income he may plead abundance of examples in the class to which he has attached himself; yet he is forced to bear the consequences himself; and not to inflict them on his children and descendants, as an English squire would be able to do. It is no doubt the duty of every man to live within his income, and yet if the Maharaja had failed to acquire a virtue, rare indeed among eastern princes, and not too common in the class to which he belongs by adoption, there is no Englishman who would feel ashamed if he or his descendants were thereby to come to want. Maharaja rebutted these allegations in a rejoinder to this editorial of 'The Times' in the best possible convincing manner. The government, however were not to change their attitude.

The Maharaja was now completely disillusioned and expressed himself more freely than even before. He now understood the game plan of his British masters. The whole affairs of Maharaja Duleep Singh was best summed up in a letter to editor of 'The Times' dated 30 July, 1833 by Mitchell Henry. The letter also suggests that there were some who not only understood the position of the Maharaja but also supported it. The excerpts from the letter make it absolutely clear:

*Lord Dalhousie, whose rage for Indian annexations is matter of history, there upon determined to take possession of The Punjab, and accordingly in March 1849, a treaty was signed by the Maharaja under which he resigned his sovereign rights to the kingdom of Lahore, as well as the state property and the Koh-i-noor, in exchange for a pension of between four and five lakhs of rupees, that is between £40,000 and £50,000 a year ... In 1854 he came to England and has resided here ever since as an English county gentleman, but treated by Her Majesty with peculiar affection and distinction almost as a royal personage. He was given an allowance of £12,000 which was later on increased to £15,000 and after settling down in England it was increased to £25,000 a year and*



*as there was an accumulation of funds arising from the treaty money not disposed of, the government was enabled to purchase out of it an estate in Gloucestershire for the sum of £105,000 as a home for the Maharaja. The purchase was not a success, and the Government then agreed that the Elveden property in Suffolk should be bought instead ... It was bought by the proceeds of the sale of the Gloucestershire property ... For this the Maharaja has to pay the Government interest on two sums, the one at four percent, and the other at five percent amounting £5654 a year. After deducting the amount, he has to pay for as insurance amount he was left with £15,000 out of which he had to maintain the property. The thing is simply impossible, and it is not surprising that the Maharaja should now be compelled to renounce his position as the 'Squire of Eleveden'.*

The letter further adds:

*This however, is not all. The Indian Government has a right by the Treaty of Lahore to, allocate the 4 lac fund as it pleases between the Maharaja, his family and servants, but it has no right to confiscate it to its own use. This, however, has been done.*

Referring to the income of £25,000 the letter says :

*The state advanced to him positively out of the accumulation of his own money secured to him by treaty, the capital required to buy the suffolk property, and now charges him a high rate of interest upon it. Even now the Government is the guardian of the Maharaja. But what kind of guardianship is that which helps a young man to buy a property worth a quarter of a million, and takes a mortgage of four and five per cent upon an estate which could never produce even two and half per cent? To burden an income of £25,000 a year in a way I have described, was the surest way that could have been devised if the Government had desired to ruin its ward rather than to protect him.'*

This letter makes it abundantly clear that the Maharaja had such convincing power & was wide aware enough that he was able to bring home his point to a few conscience keepers with his assertions on serveral issues and chose to remain refractory till his end although he had to wage a grim struggle against the then all powerful British empire and live through it.



## VII

# MAHARAJA DULEEP SINGH IN THE EYES OF NON-SIKHS

## A Survey of Indian Historical Tradition

*Himadri Banerjee*

In the Sikh studies we have been accustomed to listen of the following asseration of Lieutenant colonel Malcolm: '[ It] is of the most essential importance to hear what a nation has to say of itself.' We have thus been taught to regard the *Janam Sakhi* literature as our indispensable guide to the reconstruction of the life and message of the founder of the *Panth*. Similarly the *Sri Gur Sobha* sources have equally been taken into consideration outlining the development of the history and culture of the Sikhs of the subsequent centuries. But we occasionally come across dissenting voices regarding some averments of the Sikh sources. This has added newer dimensions in our understanding of the traditional Sikh ideals and institutions. It stimulates debates and a few leading organisations have come forward with a meaningful version of what they consider to be the 'authoritative and sober defence of Sikhism'.

Again the contribution of some British officials and scholars have no less been impressive in this field. Ganda Singh's *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs* (1962) is an index of their pioneering contributions. This branch of Sikh studies has continued to be enriched by the academicians of the West. Barrier's scholarly study introduces us to a significant area of this

scholarly tradition while Dr. Trilochan Singh's posthumous work is sure to break a fresh ground of our understanding of the 'hypercritical' 'urbane' tradition of western scholarship.

While we have been keeping a close watch over the minutest details of what is being written in the West, we need to be equally conscious of what has been depicted in the different regional languages of Indian sub-continent of the last one hundred and fifty years. Perhaps, we are hardly aware of the vast source materials lying scattered in the different libraries and elsewhere. Many of us would agree that they perhaps constitute a neglected area of Sikh studies. We may be knowing a lot about the Sikhs of Southall, Santa Barbra and Yuba Valley. Are we keeping ourselves in close touch with the Sikhs of Sri Lanka, Barkola and Hathipara of the Brahmaputra Valley? Similarly, many of us are not aware of the contribution of an unknown *granthi* of the Bara Sangat Gurdwara of Calcutta who had helped Tinkari Banerjee in translating some sections of the *Surajprakash* in Bengali, we have equally forgotten those people who restored the Kaliaboda Gurdwara (situated on the banks of the river Mahanadi in Cuttuck, built in memory of Guru Nanak's visit to Jagannath Puri) to its pristine glory on the eve of *gurpurab* of 1935. Thus many of us may be reading the pioneering studies of Indubhushan Bangerjee, Narendra Krishan Sinha and Anil Chandra Banerjee and regard them as isolated examples of Sikh historical tradition in eastern India. On the contrary, they had before them a long list of pioneers, many of whom still remain unknown to us. They come from different walks of life-poets, philosophers, political propagandists, travellers, journalists, religious reformers, novelists, dramatists and biographers. They outlined the lives of the Gurus, reconstructed the role of the martyrs, analysed the achievements of the crown heads, reviewed the significance of the *Rahit Maryada*, translated the sacred literature, depicted the history of the leading gurdwaras and portrayed the struggling personalities



of Sikh women in their mother tongue. These studies add local colour and flavour to Sikh studies. This non-Sikh perception of Sikh studies has its own importance when the Sikhs themselves have been coming into greater interactions with the non-Sikhs beyond Punjab. But these Works are partially indebted to the colonial rule. As the British administration had steadily penetrated deep into the heart of the subcontinent, it introduced railways, made use of regional languages in local law courts and educational institutions, facilitated the development of native press stimulating dialogue among the vernacular elites of the presidency towns, *muffasil* headquarters and even beyond. Growing interaction at the different levels of the society in the perspective of India's struggle for freedom necessitated an urge for a new national identity based on shared or imagined experiences of the past. Vernacular press was destined to become an important vehicle of the pan Indian identity in which history was reconstructed and revised for the consumption of their own community.

You will all agree that the above does not explain the whole story of it. A century old Brahmo search for a separate and identical monotheistic tradition in Indian religious system, as we have seen elsewhere also led to a quest for Sikh philosophy and religion. Actually, the Brahmos of Bengal and Orissa played a pioneering role in popularising the message of Sikhism in this part of the country. Another factor was the repercussions of the different political developments of Punjab in the eastern Indian native press. Thus the experiences of the second Sikh war were frequently reported in the *Orunodoi*-the earliest Assamese monthly journal published from Sibsagar. They also kindled the poetic imagination of Iswarchandra Gupta, editor of the *Sambad Parbhakar*. It would be no exaggeration to argue that the Akali struggle for the gurdwara reforms of the 1920s frequently hit the headlines of the various newspapers of Calcutta, Cuttak,



Dibrugarh, Guwahati, Patna and Puri. Prior to it, the activities of Maharaja Duleep Singh in India, England and the continent did not altogether miss the attention of the people. His death raised a storm of protests and his tragic end was frequently debated in the native press.

This present seminar is an occasion to recapitulate them. The non-Sikh perception of the Maharaja is nearly a century old process and it represents various shades of opinion. The dethroned king was both hailed and criticised by the authors who had tried to assess the royal role on the basis of their own understanding of the problem. We may get a glimpse of the author's individual bias which was often projected in his/her writings. Every historian is again a representative of his age and his analysis of the sources of history provides us a glimpse of the development of historiography in the region. Here we would be dealing with only two monographs: one written in Bengali while the other in Hindi. They were both published from Calcutta which enjoys the proud of privilege of bringing out *The Sikh Review* for over nearly four decades. These works are separated from one another by nearly thirty years and review the Maharaja from two distinct standpoints at a time when the city itself had been experiencing a significant rise in the political barometer of the subcontinent. Of the two works dealing with the life of Maharaja Duleep Singh, Barodakanta Mitra's monograph *Sikh Judher Itihas of Maharaja Duleep Singh* was published first in 1893 and is still regarded to be an important landmark in the development of Bengali historiography on the Sikhs. The study may broadly be divided into two parts: the first one highlights the history of the Anglo-Sikh Wars, which, in the opinion of the author, marks 'the most decisive event' in the history of the nineteenth century India. The life of Maharaja Duleep Singh along with his fight for an honourable political settlement constitute the subject matter of the second part of the volume.



It is still considered to be the most detailed account of Duleep Singh's life in Bengali. Divided into six chapters, this part reviews the career of Duleep Singh from 1849 (the year of his leaving Lahore for Fetehtarh) to 1893 (the year of his end in Paris). Regarding his sources, Mitra made no secret of his preference for Lady Login's writings. A careful reader cannot fail to notice the reference to the Maharaja's early enthusiasm for Christianity, his willingness to go to England, and after his mother's death, his growing disillusionment with the British are primarily based on Lady Login's observations. The author also drew frequently from the contemporary newspapers like the *Times*, *Moscow News*, *Statesman* and *Englishman*, while reconstructing the pages of the Maharaja's closing days. *The Tribune* is however missing in the Bibliography. But what distinguishes Mitra's study is his awareness of the importance of the official sources like the parliamentary papers and the official dispatches which do not find their rightful place in any other writing on Sikh history in Bengali.

Mitra's volume also merits attention owing to its analytical projection of the changes in the relationship between the Maharaja and the Queen Mother Jindan over the years. Here again he seems to have broadly followed Lady Login's account and acknowledges his debt in the footnotes. The biographer finds that young Duleep was not very sorry when he was first separated from his mother. Later on when he was in England, as the news of the mother's plight started reaching his desk, he became increasingly restless and developed a longing for her. When Duleep gradually grew up to be a matured man, Mitra argues, he tried to remain close to his mother, and the relationship became warm. The Queen made her son conscious of his royal heritage as well as of his association with *Panah*. Mitra could bring out the mother's profound influence upon her son whose readiness to set sail for India for cremating the mother's earthly remains add a human touch to this volume. The historian has reviewed the



relation between the Maharaja and the English administration with an equal skill. He points out the cause of complaint with a mixed touch of sympathy and melancholy. But the author does not seem to be happy with the Maharaja's decision of coming out of British political influence, nor does he ever find any justification in the later's momentous declaration of taking the *Pahul* again in Punjab and the charges against the India Council's vascilitating policy on the settlement of his different financial claims. Mitra writes favourably about the Maharaja so long as he did not challenge the British authority in India and sympathises with him so long as the debate with the home Government was going on behind the scene. Later on when the Maharaja was criticising the English in Public, he is no longer friendly towards him. His early sympathy evaporates and a sullen frame of mind takes its palce. His loyalty towards the Crown perhaps affects his historical judgement and partially explains some of his uncharitable comments on Duleep Singh's fight for freedom in the continent. Since the security and continuation of British rule in India constituted the cornerstone of his scheme of history, the policies which, in his opinion, would affect the British position in the sub-continent, could hardly evoke any favourable reception. This also largely explains his earlier accusations of Lord Dalhousie for his aggressive policy leading to the Sepoy Mutiny in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Mitra's sympathy for British rule as well as his criticism of the Maharaja were largely an outcome of the conditions under which he had undertaken the task of writing history in the last decade of the nineteenth century. The author belonged to a traditional and respectable family of north Calcutta known for their loyalty and support to British rule in the region. He inherited his family convictions and believed in the regenerating effect of the presence of the British in the country. Incidentally, those were also the days when the congress moderates were talking about



imperial blessing and from the Congress platform. They could hardly dream of an end to British authority in India and generally asked for certain changes in Indian administration through constitutional means. Mitra's scheme of history thus first is well within the intellectual climate of the presidency towns centering around the prevailing Congress politics of the period and he was well-disposed towards the Sikh monarch so long as he was not in conflict with this basic calculation about British rule in India. But the Maharaja's bitterness towards the English resulted in a corresponding change in his attitude. His study, however, merits attention on two points: it surpassed all other previous works on Sikh history in its analytical treatment of the various categories of sources and it provided Bengali readership for the first time with a biography of the Sikh monarch who was going to be hailed as a martyr in the succeeding decades of the next century. In spite of its cool reception in the contemporary press, the book was destined to serve as a model before those who were going to undertake any study on the life and achievements of Maharaja Duleep Singh in the next century.

In the present century, as the nationalist movement took a tumultuous turn, vernacular elites could hardly remain satisfied with Mitra's assessment about Maharaja Duleep Singh. There was a growing need for redrawing the portrait with a nationalist colour, re-evaluating his relationship with the British government and re-examining his role in the continent. In the native press, a new genre of literature was increasingly brought out highlighting the contemporary nationalistic and patriotic sentiment. Consequently, the history of the Maharaja was given a glow of martyrdom — a dimension missing in the study of Mitra. They also provided a greater emphasis on issues like the ill-treatment meted out to the Sikh ruler by the Home Government, his tragic end in Paris in the midst of poverty and sufferings. Duleep Singh's humiliation at the hands of the 'home' Government was



compared with that of the Indians under British rule. This sentiment did not figure in the writings of Mitra. Instead of maintaining a silence like Mitra, they made no secret of their sympathy and support for the Sikh monarch and often narrated the course of events as his defence counsellor in the court of law. In this category of writings, Nandkumardev Sharma's *Punjab Haran aur Maharaja Duleep Singh* (1921) merits special attention. It was written in Hindi, the author was associated with the Hindi nationalist press of northern and eastern India for long and wrote a few popular biographies of the nationalist leaders. He had a genuine regard for the study of Indian history, though he had no formal training at the College/university levels. History, according to him, had a moral regenerating power of its own and its meaningful study would help us understand the distinctiveness of Indian character, heritage and identity. 'It should be read', he pointed out, 'for learning lessons from our past failures' and 'stimulating a sense of national solidarity' in 'our struggle against British rule in India'. With these views, Nandkumardev initiated his review of the history of the Sikhs. He had been contemplating of writing a history of the Sikhs since 1906 when he was in Lahore as a journalist with a local newspaper. He gradually acquainted himself with the different well-known secondary sources of Sikh history and published two monographs outlining the evolution of the *Panth* since the birth of Guru Nanak till the annexation of Punjab, in 1914 and 1920. His studies carried a deep note of patriotic sentiment and highlighted the martial tradition of the Sikhs in their resistance against the Mughals and the British. He was of the opinion that the Khalsa was defeated owing to the selfishness of the Sikh Sardars as well as lack of unity among a larger number of Sikhs. He, therefore, urged upon the Sikhs of his generation for presenting a united resistance against the Britishers in India. His third study is the *Punjab Haran* which brings out the profile of young Duleep Singh in the



background of the annexation of Punjab after the Second Sikh War. Unlike Mitra, Sharma begins his account of Duleep Singh with all sympathy and argues that he fell a prey to British evil designs in the sub-continent. He was extremely critical about the British presence in India and underlined the need for Sikh support in resisting the colonial masters in that region. There is very little doubt that the prevailing political situation of the country must have played a decisive part in formulating his own plan of history and a brief reference to it would not be altogether irrelevant here.

Incidentally, these were the years when resistance against British authority had already attained a crucial stage under the leadership of Gandhi Ji. Punjab had witnessed the ravages of the Rowlatt Satyagraha and the Jallianwala massacre. The Sikhs were all bitter after the World War I owing to different reasons and, therefore, were setting the ground ready for the Akali-led Gurdwara Reform Movement leading to the birth of the SGPC in the 1920. Above all, there was the Non-Cooperation Movement which was destined to engulf the whole of India and carried the national struggle to a higher level; never reached before. It is nothing unusual that Sharma's volume would be reflecting a bitter anti-British nationalist sentiment through Duleep Singh's struggle against the Home Government and the Britishers in India. Thus, a sea change had taken place in the political horizon since Mitra had completed his study nearly three decades ago. Sharma's Duleep Singh was fighter for freedom from the British hegemony; his crusade in the Continent represents an early phase of India's struggle for independence in the nineteenth century. Thus, an identity of emotion and aspiration between the historian and his study of history brought to life 'the dead hands of the past'. The Sikh monarch's fight with the English no longer remained a story of the distant past, but Sharma the historian was going to present it almost in the context of the early 1920s when the Akalis themselves would be fighting for their gurdwaras and

the deposed monarch of Nabha. Here history joins hands with the contemporary Indian political climate in which Duleep Singh's resistance and martyrdom came to be remembered again and again championing the cause of another deposed monarch, namely, Ripudaman Singh. In this scheme of historiography, James Davy Cunningham and Evans Bell were to enjoy a place of honour and respect. Cunningham in particular was almost universally admired in the native press. While Mitra might have some complaints against Cunningham, Sharma in his preface made him the symbol of historical honesty owing to his suffering and insult at the hands of the colonial administration. Hence sharma's Cunningham was very dear to the India's nationalist historiographical tradition and, therefore translations of Cunningham's study in different regional languages were nothing unusual.





## VIII

# MAHARAJA DULEEP SINGH : A PSYCHOANALYTICAL STUDY

*Surinder Kaur Anand*

The life story of Maharaja Duleep Singh is a tragic saga of suffering, miscarriage of justice and deprivation of the throne that was lawfully his. Robbed of his mother's protection and nursing at a tender age, and deprived of his native cultural trappings in childhood, Maharaja Duleep Singh was exposed to Christian milieu in which his own native symbols become anachronistic. By and by the unscrupulous English authorities saw to it that the Maharaja became westernised through and through. Initiated into Christianity not by his own volition and conviction but by the cruel machinations of the Britishers who saw to it that he loses visible symbols of a Sikh, the young Maharaja was kept away from his native Punjab and cultural moorings. Lest Duleep Singh should become a rallying point for the discontented Sikh soldiery, he was not allowed to visit the Punjab so that the existence of the empire in India was not threatened. Nevertheless, he kept up the banner of his revolt against the British injustice and indiscretions by challenging and pricking the Christian conscience of the white rulers by harping on his incessant grievances against the unjust and illegal usurpation of his throne. The very fact that the Maharaja was physically prevented from reaching Punjab, amply demonstrates the tremors that his defiant, vituperative and satirical communications to the British authorities had caused. Through

his persistent endeavours to free himself and his countrymen of the British yoke, and return to the land of his ancestors, Maharaja Duleep Singh ranks among the pioneers of the freedom movement against the British imperialism. The following pages portray Maharaja Duleep Singh from Psycho analytical perspectives. All psychologists agree that a mother is a child's fulcrum against the nasty, brutish and Machiavellian forces that obtain in human life. Through her self-sacrificing love and protection, she infuses in her child confidence and courage to understand the dynamics of life. However, if one takes recourse to the vicissitudes that marked post-Ranjit Singh scenario in Punjab; one finds that the English ruling elite that swore by the otherwise noble Christian ethics, had flagrantly violated even the basic human decencies by depriving the child Maharaja, Duleep Singh of the loving and warm embrace of his only parent, Maharani Jind Kaur, "a woman of determined courage, the only person apparently at Lahore who has courage" (Lord Ellenborough to the Duke of Wellington, 20th Nov. 1843). Infact, the cunning Britishers had different designs as is borne out by Lord Hardinge's letter to Sir John Hobhouse (August 14, 1847): "Ranee must be deprived of all power... Her power of obstructing the Government by constantly making the mind of the boy to resist and hate (Britishers) must be effectively prevented." Hence; an eight year old child, Maharaja Duleep Singh was separated from his mother.

As a "precocious" child who had experienced one trauma after another, Duleep Singh's mind was formed. The child Duleep Singh administered the first affront to the British presence by refusing to anoint Raja Tej Singh and "When he was pressed to do so he tucked his little hands under his arms and resolutely resisted any entreaty" (Lord Hardinge to Sir John Hobhouse, 14th August, 1847).

Before this process of defiance could unfold itself and assume tightening postures, systematic attempts were made to



extirpate the visible signs of the nativity of Maharaja Duleep Singh. Dr. Login, his tutor manifested the spirituality and benevolence of a Christian life to the young Maharaja. It was the most momentous period of Duleep Singh's life. The psychologists concur that childhood is the most impressionable period of a man's life when one's imagination is coloured by whatever one sees happening in one's home or around. The young Duleep Singh knew only Christian friends, Christians tutors and Christian ethos. The process of indoctrination on the young mind had commenced. The earlier daily routine of the Maharaja comprising of obeisance before *Guru Granth Sahib*, listening to *Gurbani* and taking of *prasad*, was terminated. The *Granthi* was replaced by Bhajan Lal, a Brahmin with avowed sympathies and inclinations for Christianity, who was educated at an American presbyterian Mission, became a convenient tool in furthering the designs of the English and helped the Maharaja in his drift to Christianity, so much so that Lord Dalhousie sent a Bible to the young Maharaja and after weaning him away from the faith of his ancestors, Dalhousie claimed that "with the conversion, the political influence of the Maharaja had been destroyed forever" (Lord Dalhousie to Dr. Login, 23 July, 1851). In his letter to Dr. Login, Dalhousie forthrightly stated his mind: "I do not wish to countenance any relations henceforth between the Maharaja and the Sikhs, either by alliance with a Sikh family, or sympathy with Sikh feeling" (13th April 1850). The devilish strategy of Dalhousie was to rob the Maharaja of his Sikh identity, thereby eliminating the possibility of a potential rallying point for the betrayed Sikhs. With this end in mind Dalhousie wrote a letter to Sir George Couper (11 October, 1854) as the day Duleep Singh will be sixteen, drew near:

"The 'nightcappy' appearance of his turban is his strongest national feature. Do away with that and he has no longer any outward and visible sign of a Sikh about him."



The available historical evidence regarding the presentation of Kohi-i-noor by Maharaja Duleep Singh to Queen Victoria, requires a closer scrutiny. In this context Lady Login's recording of the interview, deserves an insightful analysis. Lady Login, as the narrator controls the flow of information about this episode. Her sympathy may lie on the side of her masters but her portrayal of "passion of repressed emotion in Duleep Singh's face" gives a probing peep into the spiritual struggle that had seized and gripped the mind of young Maharaja: "as he found himself once more with the *Koh-i-noor* in his grasp, turning and turning that stone about in his hands. as if unable to part with it again, now that he had it once more in his possession" (Lady Login, p.342).

From then on Maharaja Duleep Singh began to assert himself. The first noticeable act of assertion is his rejection of princess Gouramma of Coorg as a prospective wife in spite of the fact that she was queen's god-daughter. His "I could never marry her" provides a prevision of the things to come. The Maharaja's letter of 9th December 1856 to Directors of the East India Company speaks volumes of what had troubled his mind all those years.

"Having now attained an age at which according to the laws of India, I am entitled to assume the management of my own affairs and being anxious, before my intended departure for India, in October next, to have clearly defined and settled ... Having at an early age of ten years been required to resign the throne of the Punjab ..."

It also expressed the Maharaja's strong reservations about the restrictions on his residence which he described as "irksome." He had started judging correctly the rectitude of the treatment meted out to him by his English guardians. Sir John Login's letter to Sir Charles Wood (Lady Login, pp.502-504) that "the Maharaja was deprived of his throne, and required, through the ministers that we had placed around him, to accept such terms as we



imposed upon him” throws flood of light on the compelling circumstances under which the young Maharaja had to affix his signatures on various treaties and agreements.

In 1860, about twenty one years after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and having annexed Punjab in 1849, the Britishers were awfully terrified of the potential threat to the Crown, that could result from the visit of Duleep Singh to the Punjab or the frail queen mother; Jind Kaur who was languishing in exile at Kathmandu. Quite cautiously, the Maharaja was restricted to Calcutta. But the arrival of Maharani Jind Kaur in England was described as “misfortune” for the Raj (Lady Login, pp.464-465) because the Maharaja was “getting thoroughly under his mother’s influence” (Lady Login pp.468-470). It was an unpalatable fact that Britishers had to contend with. They always viewed with trepidation the proximity between the Maharaja and the Queen Mother. Sir Charles Philip’s letter to Sir John Login (4th Jan. 1862) sums up their fears: “nothing could be so destructive to the Maharaja as that he should succumb to his mother’s or any other native influence.”

The presence of Maharani Jind Kaur in England stirred the dormant patriotic urges of the Maharaja. Before her death in August, 1863, Maharani Jind Kaur had, however, enlightened her son about his glorious royal Sikh heritage, and the insidious intrigues and conspiracies of the Britishers who had usurped through underhand means, the *Khalsa Raj*, and enkindled in him the urge to take the *faringbees*’ head on. Thereafter the tone and tenor of Duleep Singh’s communications to the British authorities about his private estates the details of which he had been acquainted with by his cousin, Thakur Singh Sandhanwalia (9th Nov. 1883) becomes sarcastic. The whole exercise culminated in a letter under the heading “The Claims of an Indian Prince” which was published in ‘The Times’ of August 31, 1882. Thus the Maharaja was able to put in perspective the perfidious, illegal and



immoral acts of the British rulers during his infancy and minority, and let the public know how the terms of the Treaty of Bhyrowal were grossly abused and the Maharaja unjustly deprived of his kingdom. (Evans Bell, *The Annexation of the Punjab and Maharaja Duleep Singh*, pp. 92-96 ).

From the beginning of 1884, the Maharaja was in a state of despondency. He took a belligerent line and hit the British Indian Government where they were most sensitive — the questionable annexation of the Punjab, the unjust deposition of the Maharaja, the arbitrary interpretation of the treaty by the Britishers that was signed under duress by the child Maharaja. Consequently, the Maharaja's actions triggered off a chain of alarms. On August 15, 1885, Ponsonby wrote to Lord Randolph Churchill expressing Queen's fears that the Maharaja "may take some steps which may lead to serious consequences." (Michael Alexander and Sushila Anand, *Queen Victoria's Maharaja Duleep Singh 1838-93*, p.190). The satirical and provocative vein persists in Duleep Singh's communications to the British authorities. On 2nd Nov. 1885, on learning that if he went to India he would be confined to the small hill station in southern India at Ootacamund, which was as far from Punjab as possible, he wrote a daring letter. The vituperative tone of his letter to Lord Randolph Churchill deserves to be noted: "I welcome the official persecution which awaits me in India...I feel very proud indeed of the fact that the buzzing of a wretched little gnat should have disturbed the repose of the Mighty British Lion, and in consequence the India Govt. should think it necessary as it were to 'set out to seek a flea.' (Michael Alexander & Sushila Anand p.193) The Maharaja was still a threat to the security of the empire. That accounted for the persistent attempts of the Britishers to keep the Maharaja away from the Punjab, so much so that Maharaja Duleep Singh had to perform the last rites of his mother, Maharani Jind Kaur, at Nasik, near Bombay. But now



Duleep Singh "was quite prepared to suffer any persecution from the most immoral and unjust British Govt., which prefers to bully the weak, rather than disgorge what it had acquired in a most unscrupulous manner." (Michael Alexander & Sushila Anand, p.194) The authorities were still thinking of buying off the Maharaja to extinguish the re-ignited sparks of nationalistic fervour in him. Sir Owean Burne was given the job of testing the Maharaja who had already abjured Christianity. His meeting with Maharaja Duleep Singh (Ganda Singh, pp.226-228) reveals in unmistakable terms the mind of the Maharaja who "was resolved to go to India... to settle at Delhi ...". The Maharaja's serious warning to Sir Owen Burne, provides a probing leap into his psychic state:

"If they touch me, it will shake the Punjab, if not now, at any rate later on, I am determined to go."

In fact, so great was the fear of the Maharaja that Colonel Hennessy when asked by Government House for his opinion, asserted that "the gravest discontent prevails, the law courts are draining the life drops of the unfortunate population ... the spirit of the Sikh is not dead, and they are full of national fire. I should tremble in my shoes were that gentleman (Duleep Singh) to arrive at our borders with Russians. The British Govt., should hold him fast and secure in England in my opinion." (Michael Alexander and Sushila Anand, p. 210) Before the Maharaja could return to India to assume "authority over the Sikh nation," he was arrested at Aden on the charges of his communications to the Political Secretary at India." (Viceroy, Simla to Secretary of state, London 15th April, 1886, Ganda Singh, pp.268-269). Even at Aden, the masks on the faces of the English rulers got removed, thus exposing their dual standards of morality to the world at large. Despite his deteriorating health, Maharaja Duleep Singh wrote to *The Times of India*, about the "iniquitous treaty of annexation which was extorted from me by my guardian when I was minor." (6th July, 1886)



Again, while in Paris, the Maharaja sought help from the Irish Revolutionaries, and then established contact with the Russian government through their Ambassador. Maharaja Duleep Singh's letter to the Tsar whereby he effectively invited the Tsar to invade India on the Maharaja's behalf, provides an adequate clue to the working of Duleep Singh's mind. The letter spells out how "an easy conquest of India" by the Russian Army could be within the realm of possibility in view of the "promised assistance of the Princes of India with their armies" and the Maharaja's "power to raise the entire Punjab in revolt and cause the inhabitants to attack the British forces in their rear." (Duleep Singh to the Tsar, 10th May, 1887, Ganda Singh, letter no. 428) Similar patriotic zeal for the deliverance of India is reflected in Maharaja Duleep Singh's undated appeal to his "Brother Princes of Hindustan" (Ganda Singh, letter no. 450), Again in his latest plea to the Sikhs, issued from Geneva on 25th June, 1889, Maharaja Duleep Singh exhorted his "beloved fellow countrymen" for the "sacred cause of freedom" (Ganda Singh, letter no. 624) and assured them that with the "material support of Russia, we will appear again among you as conquerors." The crusade of the "deeply wronged legitimate Sovereign of the Sikhs" was prematurely halted in early 1890 by a paralytic stroke that undermined the fighting spirit of the Maharaja. Yet he preferred and mentally willed to die in Paris in October, 1893.

Bereft of mother's love and protection, coerced into signing some of the treaties that were turned against him, deposed as a Maharaja, manipulated and westernised by his Christian masters, weaned away from his religious and cultural roots, Maharaja Duleep Singh persisted with his attempts to assert, defy and also prick the English authorities by exposing the dubious annexation of the Punjab. His singular minded zeal to free the land of his ancestors from the English tyranny, could not make much headway. Nevertheless, the single man army called Maharaja



Duleep Singh through his defiant but patriotic deeds, kept on causing tremors in the British, Empire. This psychic state indicates the stuff Maharaja Duleep Singh was made of.

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## IX

# MAHARAJA DULEEP SINGH IN PUBLIC ESTIMATION

*M.L. Ahluwalia*

On the occasion of the first death centenary of Maharaja Duleep Singh it would be more befitting to recollect what type of person the last sovereign of the Punjab was, how he reacted to the personal tragedies that befell him ever since his birth. Although he could hardly remember the death of his father, but he was face to face with the ghastly murder of his maternal uncle, Jawahar Singh. The attempt at his abduction by chieftains and army *panches*, his separation from his beloved mother was too much for a child of his age to bear. The signing away of the kingdom and his banishment from Punjab followed by 'planned' conversion to Christianity were grievous events that came in quick succession.

Born as a prince, he seems to have opened his eyes when the stars on the horizon were inauspicious. Here one is tempted to recall the prophecy made by the court astrologer when asked to prepare the new-born *Shahzada's* horoscope, as recorded in the court diary Umdat-ut-Twarikh: "The Maharaja was at Amritsar in connection with the marriage of Kanwar Naunihal Singh his grandson from the heir apparent Kanwar Kharak Singh, when Munshi Govind Ram Shai brought the happy tidings from Lahore that a son was born to Rani Jindan on 23rd Bhadon Bikrami (6 September, 1838 A.D)." He further notes that on getting this news



the *Sarkar* (Maharaja Ranjit Singh) exhibited unlimited pleasure and ordered that the horoscope of the young prince be prepared. This was done, but when the astrologer Pandit Madhusudan prepared the *Kundli* (horoscope); he found that the venus (star of happiness and pleasure) and pisces (star of birth) were in evil conjunction, he did not move further to prepare a detailed horoscope, saying that "the people who understand astrology could guess better and that the exercise for preparing a detailed chart could be undertaken if the Maharaja so desired." In any case the usual presents and ornaments were got prepared by the Maharaja for the infant and his mother and despatched to Lahore through the same *Munshi*. The Maharaja also presented an 'ardas' of Rs. 1100/- at the Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) and announced that as he had reconquered the fort of Jamurd from Amir Dost Mohamed Khan of Afghanistan, a new fort be built at the mouth of the Khyber and renamed as Duleep Garh after the name of Shahzada Duleep Singh.

After ten months of the birth of Prince Duleep Singh, Maharaja Ranjit Singh himself died, as people would like to describe under the influence of adverse stars of the new baby. Be as it may, some other astrologers who were consulted later on by Maharani Jindan, all predicted that the Young Shahzada was sure to become the sovereign in the place of his father at a very young age. This is exactly what happened. Duleep Singh, by a quirk of fortune was declared Maharaja in September, 1843 after the murder of his elder half-brother, Maharaja Sher Singh. Unluckily, one half of the vast Sikh Empire was snatched away from Duleep Singh within two years of his coming to the throne and the rest he had to surrender in March, 1849. But like Nawab Wajid Ali Shah of Oudh he was allowed to retain the title of 'Maharaja.'

It may be noted in this context that whether on the throne or not, no blemish could ever be pointed out in Duleep Singh, by the British usurpers.



A notable fact that has escaped the notice of historians about early life of Duleep Singh is that his mother Maharani Jindan was herself an educated lady by the standards of those times, and although the period of upbringing of Duleep Singh witnessed worst upheavals, the mother saw to it that young Duleep Singh got acquainted with court manners and was well trained to conduct himself as a prince as well as sovereign if the occasion arose. Therefore, we have it from the pens of not only the Logins but also Henry Lawrence and John Lawrence who took charge of the government of Lahore before and after the annexation. Sir Fredrick Currie, the shrewd Foreign Secretary attached to Lord Henry Hardinge and Dalhousie himself accepted that Duleep Singh possessed dignified manners, and was straightforward and uprighteous by nature.

Soon after his becoming the Maharaja, Duleep Singh got afflicted with small pox. So great was the concern shown by his subjects that as soon as his full recovery was announced and he was brought out; practically the whole of the populace of Lahore; young as well as old; came out to greet him.

Again when Lord Henry Hardinge laid down a condition that young Duleep Singh should go to the ferry of Variowal to sign the treaty of 16 December 1846, the people one and all expressed a great anxiety about the safe return of their ruler and Lahore was agog with rumours that the British would imprison the Maharaja and remove him from the Punjab. Henry Lawrence in one of his reports to the Governor General wrote soon after, "that for days together the people talked of nothing but the grace of God for the safe return of the Maharaja."

Earlier when Sardar Jawahar Singh his maternal uncle and Prime Minister designate after Raja Hira Singh crossed all levels of public morality and decency and the army clamoured for his blood; he took the young Maharaja with him for whose name he begged to be forgiven, the army peacefully and respectfully



removed the infant Maharaja from the howdah of Jawahar Singh's elephant before striking the fatal blow on his head. During the Dussehra of 1845, when the ceremony of the mounting of the guards, was to take place no chieftain would dare to escort Duleep Singh to the parade grounds fearing the fate of Jawahar Singh. At that time Bhai Ram Singh being also a priest accompanied the Maharaja to the parade. The army showed the usual ceremonial respect to their child sovereign.

Lady Login records several instances about the high image Duleep Singh always enjoyed amongst his people. On his way to Fatehgarh, where the British had decided to lodge the deposed Maharaja, Duleep Singh expressed a desire to have a bath in the river Ganges; preferably at Haridwar. In deference to his wishes the Governor General allowed a trip to the Ganges not at Haridwar but a few miles down stream to avoid a public concord to assemble and greet him. But as soon as the news about the presence of Maharaja Duleep Singh leaked out; hundreds of persons assembled to have a glimpse of the son of the lion of the Punjab.

Despite all adversities, Duleep Singh grew up to be a person of very tender feelings. He had a special liking for his nephew Shivdeo Singh, son of Maharaja Sher Singh. He continued to remember both his sister-in-law Rani Dakhno and nephew even when they were separated from him. Duleep Singh even insisted that Prince Shivdeo Singh be sent to England along with him as a ward, but the authorities did not agree to that. However, even while in England Duleep Singh would often write to his nephew and continued to show interest in his future, education and well being. When Duleep Singh came to India to take his mother to London, he took the permission of the authorities to visit Dehra Dun to see Shivdeo Singh, but the programme had to be cancelled, when a Sikh regiment coming back from a campaign against China and disembarking at Calcutta learnt about the presence of



Maharaja Duleep Singh at Calcutta and went to greet him at the hotel where he was staying. The British Governor General, Lord Canning got unnerved when he came to know, how much the people of the Punjab still cherished their deposed sovereign.

Lady Login also notes that Duleep Singh ever remained a full blooded Punjabi. He would not easily give up likings for Punjabi food, particularly "*Makki di Roti; Sarson da Saag*" and curry prepared in the Punjabi style. Not only that, Duleep Singh also grew up to be a very shrewd person, a perfect judge of men with diplomatic instinct. All this becomes clear when one carefully examines the correspondence of Maharaja Duleep Singh with the Court of Directors of the East India Company at London regarding the Jagirs, which were allowed to him by the treaty after the annexation of Punjab. It was for all these reasons, that Duleep Singh could create a niche for himself in the hearts of the royal couple, Queen Victoria; Prince Albert, and many members of Parliament in the opposition such as John Bright. He was a well known amateur painter and good conversationalist. To appreciate his royal manners and style; one has to go through his letters and an account of his personal talks with Lady Login when he had to say no to the proposal made by Queen Victoria herself for his marriage with the princess of Coorg, of yet another royal family who had lost their throne to the British like Duleep Singh and had also been made Christians (for the sake of imperial designs).

When Duleep Singh's secret correspondence with his mother Rani Jindan (while in exile in Nepal) was detected, he very successfully used the motherly instinct of Lady Login, who pleaded for Duleep Singh's innocence with the Court of Directors. Again when the British authorities would not let Rani Jindan live with her son in England, when she was fast losing her health, Duleep Singh again successfully used the good offices of Lady Login who persuaded col. Philips to seek government's approval for the two to join in the last days of the Maharani. We



have numerous other instances that manifest many a quality which Maharaja Duleep Singh possessed as a royal scion. But the limitations of time demand that we close this paper of reminiscences with one more illustration only. This was when Duleep Singh went to Moscow in 1887 to secure an alliance with the Czar of Russia for making a bid for the extirpation of the British from the Indian sub-continent. In his long letter of appeal to the Czar, he makes out two very interesting and pertinent remarks, one that he was asking for an alliance in the interest of the economic gain that will accrue to Russia; if India would become free. He emphasizes that the entire British trade worth millions of sterling would automatically get diverted to Russia. Secondly, he sought no financial assistance but the support of the Russian forces on payment of their expenses as he hoped to get the instinctive backing of at least 40,000 of the Punjabis and the Sikhs in the British army who would flock to his standards as soon as they came to know that Duleep Singh was at the head of the invading forces. By doing so, Duleep Singh was anticipating what Netaji Subhash Chander Bose planned to do during the second world war.

Duleep Singh was a charming prince. He became sovereign when he was only five. Lady Login says "Everyone was struck with the young Sikh sovereign's charm of manners, his geniality and love of truth, and his straight forwardness was very unusual in an oriental. One could not but have great sympathy for the boy, brought up from babyhood to exact the most obsequious servility." Occasionally my husband and Duleep Singh who both had great mutual likings for each other, would no doubt come face to face with "contests of will between them." She gives an examples: "Duleep Singh had run into the garden during heavy rain and got thoroughly drenched. Finding him in this condition, Login wished him to change his clothes, but half in play the boy said he would do so at the usual time, and when urged to change



at once, he turned obstinate." There upon she writes, that when as a guardian Dr. Login asked High Highness to do so within the next half an hour of his own accord, he would not listen, Duleep Singh got provoked when Login told him that he did not like to use compulsion; the Maharaja went sobbing to the room of Dr. Login to tell him that 'the Treaty of Lahore stipulated that he was sovereign of his will in personal life.'

During the day young Maharaja would remain busy in his studies or taking his out-door exercise, but in the evenings his nobles and ministers namely Dewan Ayodhia Parshad, Fakir Zahuruddin, Sardar Boor Singh Batalewala and other nobles who had chosen to follow their "sovereign into exile" made their appearance in full dress to pay their respects and remained in attendance on him for a few hours. Duleep Singh would sit, "in State on a Couch or Chair, with his attendants assembled around." Each one of the suite on entering made obeisance, then stood erect, with folded hands to his forehead uttering the words, "Maharaja ji" within the suddenness of a pistol shot. This salutation was made both on entering and then leaving and the Maharaja receiving their salute with, Kingly dignity" - In these evening sessions there used to be held, "incessant dissertations and arguments on the meaning and wording of the treaties particularly Bhyrowal (1846) and Lahore (1849)."

At the age of 16 or 17 years, Mr. Winterhalter did a full length portrait of Maharaja Duleep Singh for the Buckingham Palace gallery "a very handsome youth slight and graceful." On being asked by Her Majesty Queen Victoria if Maharaja ever talked or thought about *Koh-i-noor*, lady Login states that it would have been most embarrassing to answer truthfully as there was no other subject that so filled the thought and conversation of the Maharaja, his relatives and dependents, because the confiscation of the jewel which to the Oriental was the symbol of sovereignty rankled in his mind even more than the loss of his kingdom, and



I dreaded what sentiments he might give vent to were the subject once got-re-opened before him. Lady Login however took the courage as she notes to have made a very causal reference to Duleep Singh while the two were riding together in the Richmond Park saying that *Koh-i-noor* had been cut in size at Amsterdam, "would he have any curiosity to see it now in its new form." "Yes indeed I would", he affirmed emphatically- "I would give good deal to hold it again in my hand." When further asked why he was so eager about the jewel the same having been given for the British Crown. "Why? because I was but a child, an infant, when forced to surrender it by treaty, but now that I am a man. I should like to have in my power to place it-my-self than in her (Queen's) hand" was his answer.

In the next sitting when the queen got the chiselled diamond brought to show it to Duleep Singh Queen asked him 'if he thought it had improved (half its original size)', the Maharaja at once rushing from his seat (where he was posing for his portrait) after looking at it for more than a quarter of an hour near the window and having added enough tension to all those present, what he might do in a fit of temper, he moved deliberately to where the queen was standing and placed the diamond in her hands.

Such was the winsome personality of Maharaja Duleep Singh who till his end remained the darling of his people.



## X

## RAJA GULAB SINGH FACTOR

*M.L. Kachroo*

After the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1839 the Lahore Darbar fell into anarchy. It witnessed intrigues, counter-intrigues, conspiracies, murders and plunder. There were wars for sucession. The Royals as well as Sikh Chiefs, courtiers, Dorga brothers and others started seeking aid or protection from the British secretly. The quick successions sowed the seeds of civil warfare and caused rapid disintegration of the Sikh kingdom.

There were various factions in the Lahore Court, Attariwalas, Sandhanwalias, *Bhaiyas* or *Poorbias* the Dogras and Faquir brothers, who exercised a great influence in the Darbar. All of them vied more than anything else, with each other to remain at the centre-stage. Their mutual recriminations were responsible for rapid dismemberment of the Sikh kingdom, The Dogra brothers, out of them, gained ascendancy at the court. Cunningham, Charles Gough and Lepel Griffin have squarely blamed Dogras for their treacherous actions against the Lahore Darbar. But the Sandhanwalias, Attariwalas and Majithia family also played no less ignoble part in the disintegration of the Lahore government. The three Dogra brothers, Gulab Singh (the eldest), Dhian Singh and Suchet Singh, gained political ascendancy and control at the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh because of their political craftsmanship so much so that Dhian Singh was conferred the highest title of *Raja-i-Rajgan* (*Raja Kalan*) while Gulab Singh and



Suchet Singh were made Rajas.<sup>1</sup> In 1822, Maharaja Ranjit Singh entrusted the administration of Jammu hills to Gulab Singh and later granted him the governorship of Jammu in hereditary with title of a Raja.<sup>2</sup> He subsequently added Hazara to his Jagir. The three of them having been given extensive Jagirs so much so that they contributed 1/6th of total revenues of the Punjab State to the Lahore treasury. Hira Singh son of the Raja Dhian Singh was a favourite of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. During the period of anarchy, the Lahore Darbar was divided in the three intriguing factions; the Dogra brothers, the Sandhanwalias, *Bhaiya* faction and the *Muttsaadi* party led by Fakir Aziz-ud-din, Nur-ud-din, Imamudin, Dewan Dina Nath and others.

Sandhanwalias who wanted to get Prime Ministership as the nearest kinsmen of the Maharaja's family, denigrated the Dogras. It was natural because the Dogras both by the dint of their ability as well as resources, had obtained complete control over the administration of the Lahore Darbar.

Across the Sutlej, the British as paramount power in India, had by then decided to draw full benefit from continued state of anarchy at the Lahore Darbar. The three Political Agents, George Clerk, C. M. Wade and Major Broadfoot, stationed at Ludhiana, Ferozepur and Bahawalpur, did their utmost in promoting dissensions in the Lahore court, sometimes encouraging the Dogras and the other time the Sandhanwalias, the Maharaja family and some other Sikh Chiefs or courtiers with a view to add fuel to fire. There was persistent campaign against Dogra brothers and the war cry of agitation was "save the *Panth* and the Punjab from Dogra domination."

The Sikh kingdom was already in a state of political turmoil when the crisis was brought to a bursting point with the murders. Maharaja Sher Singh and Raja Dhian Singh were murdered in cold blood by Ajit Singh and Lehna Singh Sandanwalias, Dhian Singh's son Raja Hira Singh who assumed *Wazirship* was also done to



death within a year. Raja Suchet Singh was also dead by that time. With the death of Raja Hira Singh, the Dogra hegemony came to end in the Lahore Darbar. But all eyes now got fixed on Gulab Singh the most crafty among the wily Dogras.

Gulab Singh was at Jammu and was looking after his family estates and was busy consolidating his power and position in the hill territories. The hill territories valued to fetch Rs. 8,00,000 per annum, were all contiguous and secure in the *Kohistan*<sup>4</sup>. In the meantime the Darbar's army had become fully politicised and took upon itself the role of king makers since the accession of Maharaja Sher Singh<sup>5</sup>. When Hira Singh installed infant Duleep Singh as the Maharaja, the army *Panchayats* brought forward Kunwar Pashaura Singh who had sneaked into Lahore with the connivance of Major Broadfoot. The army *Panchayats* asked Raja Gulab Singh to surrender to the Lahore Darbar the property of Raja Hira Singh and the fort of Jasrota, then held by Gulab Singh. In this context it may be worthwhile to point out that it was during the year 1844 that Raja Gulab Singh seemed to have decided upon a course which brought him in complete confrontation with the Lahore Darbar both in self defence as well as a retaliatory measure, not being sure of the safety of his life and status in the changing scenario of the Darbar, call it diplomacy or treachery. The Raja entered into secret parleys with Major Broadfoot. But he was not the only guilty person. Lehna Singh Majithia and Ajit Singh Sandhanwalia were also hobnobbing with the British at Thanesar and Calcutta. Prince Pashaura Singh had offered 1/6th of the revenues of the entire State if he was put upon the throne by the British. Actually the game had been started long back by Kharak Singh, followed by Sher Singh and his sister-in-law Maharani Chand Kaur. In other words the old urdu proverb "*Hamam Mein Sab Nange Hain*" applied most appropriately to the Chiefs and Princes of the Lahore Darbar.<sup>6</sup> When Sardar Sham Singh Attariwala decided to lead the forces of the Darbar, Raja



Gulab Singh won over Jindan's brother Sardar Jawahar Singh and the army *Panches* by creating dissensions and by offering bribe to all and sundry who mattered.<sup>7</sup> In any case a team of moderate Chiefs namely Fateh Singh Mann, Sher Singh Attariwala, Dewan Rattan Chand Duggal and Baba Mihaan Singh Bedi sent by Maharani Jindan saved the situation and entered into an agreement on 22 Feb. 1845 by which Gulab Singh agreed to reach Lahore and settle the payment of arrears of revenue etc. The Govt. of India informed the Secret Committee about the late happenings at Jammu and Gulab Singh's journey to Lahore under the custody of Khalsa army.<sup>8</sup>

Before the invasion of Jammu by the Sikh army, Gulab Singh was maintaining liaison with the British authorities. In October, 1844, Raja Gulab Singh in a letter to Major Broadfoot had assured his loyalty to the British. In January, 1845, Gulab Singh sought British protection in a message to Major Broadfoot on the strength of services rendered by him during Afghan war.<sup>9</sup> But events travelled faster.

Gulab Singh stayed at Lahore and attended the Darbar when asked for. It is said that as soon as he reached river Ravi, Rani Jindan sent a letter (with an impression in saffron of five fingers fixed upon it) assuring Gulab Singh full faith and guarantee of safety. He entered Lahore with great pomp and glory escorted by the Khalsa army.<sup>10</sup> During his stay at Lahore, Gulab Singh aligned with Jawahar Singh and Lal Singh in all their nefarious intrigues. Jawahar Singh was able to grab the seat of *Wazirship* on 14 May, 1845.

Gulab Singh managed to reach back Jammu safe and sound. Now he planned to wreak vengeance on Jawahar Singh through Mian Prithi Singh's maneuvering with Khalsa army. Consequently, Jawahar Singh was murdered on 21 Sept., 1845.<sup>11</sup>

Thereafter, Lal Singh became the Prime Minister and Tej Singh was re-nominated Commander-in-Chief.<sup>12</sup> The Sikh army



crossed Sutlej and by 13 Dec., 1845, Governor General, Lord Hardinge declared war and the two armies fought the battle of Mudki, Ferozshah and Aliwal. Under the shadow of treachery and defeats, Maharani Jindan was forced to call back Raja Gulab Singh.<sup>13</sup> The Regimental *Panchayats* even agreed to make him the Prime Minister.

Prior to this, Maharani Jindan had ordered Raja Gulab Singh to go towards Peshawar and maintain law and order there. This was a move to keep the Raja away from Lahore. Raja Gulab Singh understood her intention and the over-all hostile attitude of the Lahore Darbar towards him. He wrote to the Maharani and said:

“ ... no perfidy which is consistent with the profession of love and sincerity and injuries understanding and agreements, has occurred on the part of the British government. Lend, therefore, an ear to my advice and guard yourself cautiously against such an intention and never plant yourself on that country.”<sup>14</sup>

Gulab Singh an astute politician, master tactician and a rank opportunist waited for his opportunity, arrived at Lahore on 27th January, 1846 and was accepted as minister.<sup>15</sup> On 10th February, the Sikh army suffered a major defeat at Sarbron<sup>16</sup> and Gulab Singh started negotiating peace with the British government after obtaining written approval from the Sikh Chiefs as also Maharaja Duleep Singh. He reached Kasur on 15 February, 1846 along with Sultan Mohammad Barkzai, Fateh Khan Tiwana, Bhai Ram Singh, Dewan Dina Nath.<sup>17</sup> They met Fredrick Currie, the Foreign Secretary. The discussions were continued overnight and at last, payment of one crore and fifty lakh rupees and the cession of Jalandhar Doab territory as war indemnity, was agreed upon. On the insistence of the Governor General, the young Maharaja went to Luliani on the 18th Feb., 1846, to tender personal submission. Maharaja Duleep Singh returned to Lahore on the 20th February. Soon after, British forces reached Lahore, occupied the palace



Fort upto Hathi Gate and Wazir Khan's mosque. As the Lahore Darbar was unable to pay the huge amount of war indemnity, it was there upon agreed that Gulab Singh be conferred the hill districts together with the valley of Kashmir in return for a sum of rupees one crore — the war indemnity. However, in this arrangement, Gulab Singh was to sever his connections with the Lahore Darbar and was to recognise the British as his suzerain.<sup>18</sup>

The British plan as noted by the Governor General in his despatches dated 16th January and 22 February 1846 was "it was highly expedient that trans-Beas portion of Kulu and Mandi with more fertile districts and a strong position of Nurpur and the celebrated fort of Kangra — the key to the Himalayas in native estimation should be in our possession." Secondly "the Hill areas or Kohistan comprising of Jammu, Hazara and Kashmir be separated and should be given to a Chief who was independent of the Lahore State in the event of its intransigence in future. The two parts would act as a counter check on the tribals of the Suleman hills.<sup>19</sup> Thus Jammu and Kashmir came to Gulab Singh as a part of the British strategy and scheme for the dismemberment of kingdom of the Punjab.

Gulab Singh seemingly secured for Maharaja Duleep Singh, what was described a 'reasonably moderate treaty' known to history as the Treaty of Lahore. In fact it was an acceptance of the terms dictated by the British and implementing their wishes.<sup>20</sup>

Gulab Singh has been accused as traitor, intriguer and treacherous and has been held responsible for dismemberment of the Sikh kingdom. But he was like many others at the Lahore Darbar. He was an astute diplomat and a man of foresight who made the best of the circumstances for himself. Dr. Ganda Singh has correctly assessed and analysed the whole situation: "Maharaja Duleep Singh was punished for the fault of his subjects ...." "Leave alone the *Poorbia* and the Dogras hill- chiefs who were only soldiers of fortune and not sons of the soil, the



Sandhanwalias also played an equally ignoble part in the weakening of the state. It is also a pity that the leading Sardars of the country — Attariwalas, the Majithias and the Sandhanwalias — could not rise to the occasion and stand united against the enemies of the kingdom to save it from the impending doom. But alas ! this was then common to the whole of the sub-continent of India.”

For a correct historical analysis of the role of Raja Gulab Singh in the disintegration of the Sikh kingdom, it has to be remembered that Gulab Singh was beyond doubt the richest of the Chiefs of the Lahore Darbar. He had also seized a large territory which was strategically very important to further the designs of the British.<sup>21</sup> The British had fully surveyed the vast resources of Gulab Singh and his capacity to establish himself as a Chieftain independent of the Lahore Darbar.<sup>22</sup> In one of his secret reports, Major Broadfoot had informed his government as early as January 1845 that whereas Gulab Singh was boasting of a treasury of Rs 10 crores besides jewellery, the Lahore Darbar had hardly Rs. 84 Lakhs with which to support an unruly and demanding army and financing a war with the British, was impossible.<sup>23</sup> Where did all this wealth come from? Surely, it was amassed through ignoble means and betrayal of the masters.<sup>24</sup>

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Sita Ram Kohil, *Sunset of the Sikh the Empire*, p.26.
2. Gupta H. R., *Punjab on the Eve of 1st Sikh war*, p.13.
3. Gupta H. R., *Op.cit.*, pp.14-15.
4. For details see S. M. Latif, *History of the Punjab*, p.520.
5. Gupta H. R., p.13, *Op.cit.*
6. *Sher Singh and the First War of Succession*, by M. L. Ahluwalia, IHRC Procg, Vol. No. XXXII (II), p.107.

The military *Panchayats* developed into a permanent institution. They regarded themselves as the only and the true representatives of the Khalsa people or *Sarbat Khalsa* (H. R. op. cit, p.9).



7. *Mai Chand Kaur's Rule-An estimate*, by M. L. Ahluwalia, IHRC Procs., Vol. No. XXXI, p.65 (Pt. II).
8. For details see Sect. Com., 20 June 1845.
9. Ibid.
10. Dr. Ganda Singh, *The British Occupation of the Punjab*, p.57.
11. Sohan Lal, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar IV, p.317.
12. *Gulabnama*, Tran. Charak, p.295.
13. Commenting on this event Dr. Gopal Singh states "the course of downhill was now complete."
14. Dr. Ganda Singh has summarised that the British had definite plans to go for war. He has given a few acts of provocations of the British : 1) The assemblage of British troops on the Punjab frontier, 2) collection of pontoons near Ferozepore for a bridge of boats across the Sutlej, 3) the establishment of a supply depot at Bassian near Raikot "These were unmistakable sign of the readiness of the British to take up the operations." (Dr. Ganda Singh, op. cit. p.59)
15. *Gulabnama*, Op. cit. pp.297-98.
16. The decisive battle of Sobroan brought doom to the Sikh Kingdom on the 10th Feb., 1846. Although the British won the battle, the Sikh forces fought with undaunted courage and vigour (GG's Despt. to Secret Committee No.6 of 1846).
17. For details see Sect. Com., 26 Dec. 1846, No 215.
18. Panikar, K. M. *Gulab Singh*, pp. 96-98.
19. *GG's Despt. to Secret Committee No. 3 and 6 of 1846* : Panikar, op. cit., pp.115-116.
20. Ibid. No 6 of 1846.
21. For details see Sect. Com., 26 Dec. 1846, Nos. 370 and 583.
22. Dr Ganda Singh, pp. 149 and 154, op. cit.
23. For details see Sect. Com., 23 March. 1844 No. 558.
24. It is said that immediately after the Treaty of Lahore was signed, Raja Gulab Singh carried off cart loads of treasures of Maharaja Ranjit Singh from the Lahore fort. (Dr. Ganda Singh, p.44, op. cit).



## XI

# MAHARAJA DULEEP SINGH'S VISIT TO RUSSIA

*Kirpal Singh*

Maharaja Duleep Singh's conversation to Christianity as a child and his subsequent western-style living in England could not make him oblivious of his cultural heritage. He wished to be painted with turban and yearned to live in the Punjab or Delhi among his own people. When he acquired Elevedan, his soul was searching therein the *Sheesh Mahal* of the *Suman Burj* in the Lahore Fort where he had spent his earlier years. He got various paintings of Lahore Fort and wanted his rooms to be designed on their pattern.<sup>1</sup> The Tribune, Lahore rightly observed, "it is true that the Maharaja has been in England since long time and had adopted English manners, customs and mode of life, but yet he could not have forgotten that he was born in this country and that he was the son of the most powerful of Indian Princes. Brilliant associations crowded round his infancy which all his education and foreign training may not have been able to altogether efface, and it was, therefore, natural that he should feel a longing to see the land with which those associations were so intimately connected. Amidst all the gaieties of Elvedan Hall and the pleasures of an English married life, it was impossible for him to forget that he was by birth a native of India."<sup>2</sup>

Maharaja Duleep Singh's Love for Sikhism was aroused by



his mother Rani Jind Kaur who lived with him in England for about two years 1861-63. Thakur Singh Sandhanwalia, son of famous Lehna Singh Sandhanwalia, Extra Assistant Commissioner in 1865 and who Subsequently became in 1873 founder President of Singh Sabha, Amritsar also played a significant role. In 1884-85 he went to England and stayed with Maharaja Duleep Singh (who was his cousin) for about nine months. Thakur Singh used to read the *Adi Granth* to the Maharaja. He dinned into the ears of the Maharaja that "he was a King and he would be a King." He told him that he would make him friend "*mila dena*" with his "*biradri*" and whole of Punjab wanted him.<sup>3</sup> He also got the permission of high priests of the Golden Temple, Amritsar for his reconversion to Sikhism.<sup>4</sup> One day as soon as the Maharaja got out of his bed he asked Thakur Singh to baptize him as a Sikh, saying that the soul of Guru Gobind Singh had visited him on the previous night and had commanded him to be ready.<sup>5</sup>

The years 1886 and 1887 were very significant in the life of Maharaja Duleep Singh. On 25th March 1886 he released following letter to his countrymen particularly the Sikhs:

London 25<sup>th</sup> March, 1886.

"My beloved countrymen, it was not my intention to return to India, but Satgooroo who governs all destiny, and is more powerful than; his erring creature, has caused circumstances to be so brought about, that against my will, I am compelled to quit England in order to occupy a humble sphere in India. I submit to His will; being persuaded that whatever is for the best will happen.

I now, therefore, beg forgiveness of you, Khalsajee or the Pure; for having forsaken the faith of my ancestors for a foreign religion... It is my fond desire on reaching Bombay to take *Pahul* again, and I sincerely hope for your prayer to the Sutgooroo on the solemn occasion. But in returning to the faith of my ancestors,



you must clearly understand, Khalsajee. I have no intention of conforming to the errors introduced into Sikhism by those who were not true Sikhs such for instance, as wretched caste observances, but to worship the pure and beautiful tenets of Baba Nanak and obey the commands of Gooroo Gobind Singh.

I am compelled to write this to you because I am not permitted to visit you in Punjab, as I had much hoped to do. Truly a noble reward for my unwavering loyalty to the Empress of India! But Sutgooroo's will be done.

With Wah Gooroojee da Futteh. I remain, my beloved countrymen. Your own flesh and blood."

Soon after Maharaja Duleep Singh<sup>6</sup> decided to leave England for Aden he took *Pahul* and returned to the religion of his ancestors on 25th May 1886. He telegraphed to the Viceroy." I return to Europe from 1st July next. I resign stipend paid to me under Treaty of Annexation, thus laying aside that unquittous document.<sup>7</sup>

Now, Maharaja Duleep Singh decided to set up his headquarters at Paris and gave up his English citizenship. On January 10, 1887 he announced the establishment of emigre Government at Pondicherry with Thakur Singh as his Prime Minister.<sup>8</sup> After this development Thakur Singh left Punjab with his children and trusted servants. He successfully slipped into Pondicherry from where he could communicate with Maharaja Duleep Singh. Pondicherry being a French settlement was not under the British. His association with Maharaja Duleep Singh was considered most dangerous. He continued to be a source of anxiety for the British Government. The Secretary of state for India, Lord Cross, instructed Lord Dufferin the Viceroy of India to keep strict watch on the Sandhanwalia Sardar. In his letter dated March 9, 1887 he wrote, "I am not quite easy about Duleep Singh. We are keeping as best watch over his actions that we can. But I do not like that man at Pondicherry and we shall have



difficulty in preventing Duleep Singh joining him if he is so inclined.”<sup>9</sup>

From Paris, Maharaja Duleep Singh issued three proclamations addressed to the Indians and more particularly to the Sikhs. These letters fully explained his case and lay before the people how unjustly he had been treated. The contents of these letters reproduced below, speak for themselves. However it may be added that Maharaja Duleep Singh erroneously believed that Guru Gobind Singh in *Sau Sakhi* had predicted his rule in Punjab. He has mentioned it in his last proclamation:

### (A)

Dated Paris, The 15th July, 1886

By the grace of Sri Sat Guru Ji; we Maharaja Duleep Singh, the lawful sovereign of the Sikh nation, under the Treaty of Bhyrowal entered into “without coercion” between ourselves and our Darbar on the one part and Great Britain on the other, do from hereby in consequence of the insults and indignities repeatedly offered to us-of whom the recent imprisonment inflicted on us at Aden is a proof as well as on account of non fulfilment with us of the stipulation, set aside and annul that iniquitous and illegal document the so called “Terms granted”, which was extorted from us in 1849 by our wicked Guardian, the Christian British Nation, when we were an infant of only 11 years of age, and by the above first mentioned comment, under the protection of England.

Wah Guru Jee Dee Fateh.

Sd. Duleep Singh,  
Maharaja of Sikhs

under Treaty of Bhyrowal 1846.<sup>10</sup>

(B)

Paris 1886

Brother Princes and Nobles and the people of beloved Hindustan.

By the grace of Almighty God, the Creator of the Universe, the most merciful and gracious and of Sri Gobind Singh Ji.

We, Maharaja Duleep Singh, the lawful sovereign of the Sikh Nation, have set aside and annulled that treaty of annexation of the Punjab, to the disgrace of Great Britain, be it said, was extorted from us and our Darbar, when we were of tender age, and ward of Christian England under the treaty of Bhyrowal 1846 (in order to lay his wicked hands on our dominions) by the late unscrupulous Marquis of Dalhousie.

But the moral (ii) British Nation is no respecter of "solemn covenants" and treaties when its own interests are at variance with the interests of the weaker contracting parties there to; as most of you as well as ourselves know by experience.

No, doubt, your mighty rulers will call upon you to refute the above assertion, but dare they deny that it is not in their hearts what that leading journal in England "The Times" not very long (in spite of the proclamation issued when it suited the purpose of Great Britain in the name of the Empress of India immediately after the suppression of the mutiny of 1857, to the effect that the internal administration of your respective dominions would not be interfered with by Her Majesty's representatives in Hindustan) advocated, viz., the abolition of your armies, the maintenance of which is dearer to you than life itself. But fortunately for you friends, just about that time a storm commenced to gather on the north-west frontier of India, in the presence of which your mighty rulers did not feel themselves sufficiently strong to carry out such high handed measures and you escaped therefore the fate intended for you.



We therefore, appeal to your oriental generosity Brother princes and Nobles and the people of Hindustan, as we vastly prefer to suffer the greatest degradation, humiliation and shame of *Bheekh Mangna* or begging our bread from you beloved countrymen, to being under, tyrannical and foreign Government, who, though professing code of high morality, piously swindled us out of your kingdom, and defrauded us of all our private property, both of which the British nation as our guardian under the Treaty of Bhyrowal 1846 had taken to protect upon itself to protect during our minority, and is bound in honour, either to restore the whole or give equitable compensation for the same, but Jesus Christ, by whose tenets these Christians profess to regulate their morals, had not said in vain that we do not gather grapes of thorns nor figs of thistles: therefore, not even in England is justice to be had.

The Government of India out of spite may indeed put its veto upon the generous impulse of your hearts, but if you all unite, it will be powerless to harm you as you cannot all be deposed or sent to the *Kala Panee* for not paying any heed to the arbitrary behest of such a timorous administration as it has now become. Fore see, the return to India who unlike you does not even possess a single soldier.

Therefore, be not cowards but brave and worthy of your great forefathers.

Sd. Duleep Singh

The Lawful Sovereign of the Sikh Nation.<sup>11</sup>

### (C)

#### Proclamation No. 3

Courage: Courage: Courage:

We your own flesh and blood, tell you, lift up your bowed down heads and drooping hearts "for your redemption draweth near" and by the help of the Almighty. *Aryavarta* shall once more

be free and the rising "Young India" shall enjoy both liberty and self-government.

Yes, beloved countrymen, an avenger of our common great wrongs indeed about to appear, and the just God of the Universe will shortly cause your wicked rulers to be crushed under His feet. But you must have a little more patience yet, so as to allow us to work out your salvation most effectively.

The inquitously unjust and unscrupulous administration of India have succeeded at last by their arbitrary acts in driving us away from our (we declared God) most loyal allegiance to the Empress Of Hindustan, but by the aid of Providence they shall rue the day on which they dared to insult us by causing our arrest at Aden. For although we were naturalised Englishmen, yet we were placed under arrest without a warrant having been previously obtained for our apprehension.

The British Government dared not have treated a born Englishman as us, but because we were not such, we were neither allowed a public trial nor had sufficient pecuniary means placed at our disposal (though we requested both) so as to enable us to procure and revolting charge of disloyalty preferred against us towards our then Most Gracious Sovereign.

Behold then, countrymen, that there exists one law for the Englishman and another for the hated Indian though he might even be a Christian as we were previous to our arrest at Aden, notwithstanding all the avowals to the contrary of the pious British Government.

Therefore, believe our word when we tell you that you sit on your thrones only until a convenient opportunity presents itself to your so called just rulers for your deposition: for look at what has lately taken place in Burma. In spite of the declaration of the Queen's proclamation of 1858 to the contrary, does it appear to you that the days of annexation have come to end as yet?



Therefore, friends, if you have not yet entirely degenerated into cowards and become effiminates, nor turned into mere puppets in the hands of your deadly enemies, then rise up and make common cause with us and share with us in the glory of liberating our mother country. But although we thus invite you to take part in this grand both work and duty, do not for a moment suppose that we shall seek any aid from you, for God has otherwise made us strong who were once so feeble.

Sri Khalsa ji, you by your far renowned great valour saved the British Empire in India in 1857<sup>12</sup> and you did well then to act so far we ourselves at that time were loyal to England. Besides owing to our absence from India at that period, you had no leader appointed by Sri Sat Guru Ji of your own nation to instruct you as to the part that you should have taken in the warfare that was then going on, but now in the coming struggle sovereign both by the will of Sri Sat Guru Ji as well as in the virtue of the Treaty of Bhyrowal 1846 with Great Britain (under which Christian England assumed our guardianship, though by a most pious act shortly after they swindled us out of our kingdom) to prepare for our advance into the Punjab.

We command also such as of loyal subjects as may then be serving in the British army, and who may be left behind, to attack the British forces sent against us in their rear and those who may be in the troops opposing us to come over to our side. But let our enemies and disloyal subjects beware for we intend to annihilate them utterly.

Sri Khalsa Ji, we exhort you to study the *Sakhees* and learn therein your glorious destiny as predicted by *Daswan Padsab* Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

Wah Guru Ji Ki Fateh

(February, 1887)

Sd. Duleep Singh

Sovereign of the Sikh Nation.<sup>13</sup>



After embracing Sikhism at Aden Maharaja Duleep Singh issued a letter to the "Times of India." He started therein, "Although the Indian Government succeeded in preventing me from reaching Bombay lately, yet they are not able to close all the roads that there are to India, for I return I can either land at Goa & Pondicherry, or if I fancy an overland route where I can enter the Punjab through Russia."<sup>14</sup> This greatly perturbed the Secretary of State and he wrote to Lord Dufferin on the 8th Sept. 1886, "Whatever might have been done with Duleep Singh in past times, it is impossible to treat with him now. He has openly joined his former religion. He has issued treasonable proclamation. He would enter into no terms. He will not forgive his imprisonment at Aden. All we can do is to watch and guard against him. We keep through F.O. (Foreign Office) the strictest watch upon his movements in Paris. As we are informed, he is to leave in company with a young girl Constantinople this morning. You shall be informed by telegraph all that we can learn. Meanwhile look after his friend-in--relation in Pondicherry."<sup>15</sup>

Maharaja Duleep Singh's old employee named Watson was also tipped to report to the Secretary of State. Watson wrote several letters to Lord Cross which were forwarded to Lord Dufferin in original as the former writes, "I have sent you some from Duleep Singh's old servant Watson. Are you still of the same opinion as to the Maharaja's lack of power for evil?"<sup>16</sup>

The Secretary of State for India did not even spare the family of Maharaja Duleep Singh. He called Prince Victor the son of the Maharaja Duleep Singh and asked him to discard the use of word "Maharaj Kumar" to which he readily agreed.

Since Russia was in alliance with France, England had its own apprehensions. Lord Cross wrote to Lord Dufferin:

"The renewal of, military activities on the part of Russia in central Asia is giving rise to apprehensions in England. Ruthless power that she is she ought to be tired for disturbing the peace of the whole world."<sup>17</sup>



DeGiers, the foreign officer in Russia kept a close watch on Maharaja Duleep Singh. He was in direct correspondence with the Secretary of State for India and his letters were passed on to Lord Dufferin. Giers appears to have deputed somebody else to help him in this matter. His name was Roberts. Lord Cross wrote about these men in his confidential letter dated March 25, 1887:

"The F.O. (DeGiers) assures me that we may rely upon their information and also upon their informant, meanwhile they wish us to do nothing either here or in England which arouses suspicion, but of course Roberts will keep his eyes and ears open."<sup>18</sup>

From the personal letters of Lord Cross it appears certain that he did not like S. Thakur Singh Sandhanwalia as he himself referred to Lord Dufferin, "his friend-in-relation in Pondicherry." The other person who rankled in the eyes of the British Government was Katkoff; a Russian, editor of a newspaper in Moscow. Maharaja Duleep Singh was in correspondence with him and he was arranging his visit to Russia. DeGiers was dealing with Katkoff and he was regularly reporting about him. Lord Cross wrote to Lord Dufferin in his letter dated April 5, 1887:- "we have heard nothing further as to Duleep Singh. DeGiers seems to hold his own so far against the Moscow newspaper editor who is Duleep Singh's friend." Again he wrote on April 22, 1887 :- "the great struggle between DeGiers and the Moscow newspaper editor involves great issues. Salisbury tells me that at present it looks as if DeGiers would win his own. It would be a great blessing to Europe and to India if such should prove to be the case. Looking through the extracts of vernacular press which came before us. I do not gather from them that Duleep Singh can do much harm, but if DeGiers aims, it is plain that he would not be allowed to go to Petersburg."<sup>19</sup>

British Government wanted that Maharaja Duleep Singh



should not be allowed to go to Russia. But the Maharaja had made up his mind. Mr. Katkoff was arranging his visit to Russia with the help of Mr. Patrick Gasey who was an Irish revolutionary.<sup>19</sup> It was under his passport that Maharaja reached Berlin en route to St. Petersburg. He was accompanied by a Sikh named Aroor Singh. At the central station at Berlin on the 22nd March 1887 according to press correspondent of the daily Chronicle "the satchal containing Maharaja's passport and 30,000 francs was abstracted by the British detectives" who were closely watching the movements of the Maharaja. Still he did not lose heart; he telegraphed to Katkoff at Moscow with whom he had been in previous correspondence. Katkoff asked the Maharaja to continue his journey and he would find a police permit waiting for him on the border. Despite British Government's best efforts to prevent the Maharaja from going to Moscow, he reached Moscow early in April 1887. Thus in the first round DeGiers was defeated and Katkoff won. Lord Cross in his next letter to Lord Dufferin wrote on 28th April, 1887 : - "Duleep Singh has, you see gone to Russia. He has for some time been under a feigned name at Moscow under Katkoff's auspices and there has evidently been a lot of contest between that gentleman and DeGires. I wrote to foreign office last night urging them to demonstrate from now on, Duleep Singh narrowly watch as to any effect produced in India by these proceedings."<sup>21</sup> Next day again he wrote to the Governor General, "You would have heard of Duleep Singh's visit to Russia. He has been taken up by Katkoff and is in Moscow."<sup>22</sup>

On May 10, 1887, Maharaja Duleep Singh, wrote to the Emperor of Russia, "Through my cousin Sardar Thakur Singh (a man well known both in the Punjab and all over India) I have been deputed by most of the powerful Princes of India to come to Russia and pray to the Imperial Government to take their cause in hand. These Princes possess altogether some 3,00,000 soldiers



in their service and are prepared to revolt should the Imperial Government think proper to make an advance upon the British provided that I, their representative be permitted to accompany the Imperial Army so as to assure them of the generous and gracious intentions entertained towards them by the Emperor.”<sup>23</sup>

Lord Cross wrote to Dufferin on June 2, 1887, “What will become of Duleep Singh, I do not know. He is evidently to be wielded as a mad tool by Katkoff. He is driving about Moscow every day in his best attire making great show but hitherto Emperor has kept clear. How you have heard anything of a subsidy to him from Maharaja of Kashmir. Have you heard anything of Thakur Singh and French subsidy. I shall wait your post with much interest.”<sup>24</sup>

It is very significant to note that Cross in his private letters lays stress on the struggle of DeGires, (F.O.) who was pursuing Maharaja Duleep Singh and Katkoff; the newspaper editor who was a friend of the Maharaja. It was however not clear what was the nature of this struggle but Lord Cross referred to it in several of his letters. He wrote to Lord Dufferin on March 25, 1887. “The F.O. assures me that we may rely upon their information. This struggle however ended in the death of Katkoff. Whether the British Government had any hand in it or how far DeGiers was responsible for it cannot be established conclusively. But Lord Cross’s frequent references to this struggle arouses suspicion as to the intentions of the British Government. Lord Cross was very happy to report the death of Katkoff to Lord Dufferin. He writes, “Katkoff’s death will materially interfere with his plans in Russia, and I cannot think that he will stay there long.”<sup>25</sup> It is very significant to note that Thakur Singh Sandhanwalia, about whom Lord Cross wrote to Dufferin: “I do not like that man at Pondicherry” also died almost simultaneously. Again the circumstances about his death are not known. But these incidents were very favourable to the British Government. Lord Cross



wrote in his letter of Sept. 16, 1887, "The star of Duleep Singh (if so ever there was) is not shining very bright at present. The deaths of Katkoff and his Pondicherry friend are weighty incidents."<sup>26</sup> In another letter Lord Cross intimated to the Governor General, "I have received further private information about Duleep Singh who is evidently bitterly disappointed at the turn, things have taken in Russia and is talking to the effect that "All is to be wretched peace."<sup>27</sup>

Following were the causes of the failure of Maharaja Duleep Singh's mission in Russia:

1. The two of his best supporters — Katkoff in Russia and Thakur Singh in Pondicherry died suddenly. About the latter it was strongly rumoured that he had been poisoned. Both appear to have been eliminated by British intelligence agencies. Like all events here is no conclusive proof.
2. The Foreign Minister of Russia was against Maharaja Duleep Singh. Hence Czar of Russia did not see the Maharaja.
3. Maharaja Duleep Singh had pinned great hopes on the Indian Princes who were under complete thumb of the British. They did not espouse the cause of Maharaja Duleep Singh openly.
4. The Sikh soldiers in British army did have a soft corner for the Maharaja. But they were in no position to raise their voice against the British or do something so as to help Maharaja Duleep Singh.

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## XII

# DULEEP SINGH SEEKING RUSSIAN SUPPORT: INTERNATIONALISING FREEDOM STRUGGLE OF INDIA 1887-88

*Krishan Lal Sachdeva*

**M**aharaja Duleep Singh, during his stay in England, had the opportunity of studying parliamentary Papers (Blue Books) in the British Museum. He also came across much more contemporary and secondary material in that library. Soon he was convinced that the Britishers had deceitfully deprived him of the Kingdom of Punjab. Further he came to the conclusion that they were not prepared to allow him the payment of full amount of the promised allowances. He also discovered that the treaties made no mention of his private properties and jewels. All this made him wage a long struggle. Michael Alexander and Sushila Anand who have had the advantage of studying the manuscript records of British Royal Archives in Windsor Castle, London, feel that Queen Victoria wanted the Maharaja be given greater amount of allowance, but she was only a constitutional head. Various Secretaries for State of India in both Liberal and Conservative Governments referred the matter to the Government of India, which rejected all kinds of such suggestions. The result was, Maharaja Duleep Singh, decided to return to India where living was comparatively cheaper. He probably wanted to stay in



Delhi. Lord Dufferin, the Viceroy of India, felt that Maharaja's arrival in the Punjab (in those days, Delhi was included in the Punjab Province) was likely to create a violent agitation in the country. Therefore orders were passed for stopping the Maharaja at Aden. The Maharaja refused to obey the orders and he was arrested there. Though the Maharaja was released, but it left him a bitter and a disappointed man. He refused to return to England and to draw any allowance from the British Treasury.

Thakur Singh Sandhanwalia had met him in England and had advised the Maharaja to take a more independent stand. He had also suggested him to come back to Sikh religion. During his forced stay at Aden, Maharaja Duleep Singh re-entered Sikh fold.

From Aden, Maharaja went to Paris, and began to think of going to Russia for getting support for an invasion of India, because he believed that without foreign military aid, India could not win back her independence in the nineteenth century. He twice approached the Russian Ambassador Mr. Wilhel Kottzbue, who owing to official Russian policy of averting a clash with England, did not encourage him.

Many international events and developments made Maharaja Duleep Singh believe that a war could take place between Russia and England on the question of Indian liberation. Both the countries belonged to hostile camps throughout the nineteenth century. They had fought against one another in the Crimean War (1854-56). The First (1839-1842) and second Afghan Wars (1878-1881) had taken place owing to Russian phobia. The British policy makers had thought that the steady advance of Russia towards Herat in Afghanistan would one day lead to Russian invasion of India. Prof. William Langer writes, "There was a talk of Russian advance as far as the important fortified town of Herat and of far reaching schemes directed against India." On February 18, Sir Peter Lumsden, who had been sending most alarming reports of Russian progress, was ordered that in the event of the Russian



advance on Herat, he should himself enter into the city and aid the Afghan defences... The government acting under public pressure, began to take necessary military measures. The Indian authorities were notified to prepare an army corps to be sent to Herat in case of hostilities with Russia, and Sir Peter Lumsden was told that the Government considered the advance of the Russians should be resisted by the. Afghans."

Professor Michael T. Florinsky wrote: "On March 30, 1885, there occurred a bloody battle near Ak-Teppe, in which the Afghans were defeated. Although Ak-Teppe affair took place in violation of instructions received from St. Petersburg, it was interpreted in London as an event that had brought both the sides on the verge of war. Giers (Russian Foreign Minister) requested Germany to fulfill her treaty obligations. Gladstone obtained from parliament large credits for the defence of India."

Professor William Langer supports this view point when he writes, "The clash at Penjdeh, was simply the culminating point in the developments of Central Asian question for years. Ever since the Crimean War; there had been a pretty steady Russian advance towards the frontiers of Afghanistan ..." The Russians did not proceed to Herat, but on February 21, they established themselves at Penjdeh, one of the crucial points and on which the whole dispute hinged. The crisis which ensued was the most acute since that of 1878. It undoubtedly had much to do with the capitulation of the British Government in colonial and Egyptian affairs. The government, indeed desired peace, but public opinion was united in the belief that the dangerous Russian advance must be stopped. The question of Central Asia and the future safety of India was put far above the problems of the Sudan, Egypt, or colonial expansion.

Both in St. Petersburg and in London war was regarded as unavoidable. On the London Exchange, the stocks crumbled and crashed in a panic worse than any since 1870.



In Russia the anti Czarist movements were gaining ground. The Nihilists murdered the Russian Emperor Alexander II in 1881. They were determined to carry out many more such violent deeds. Britain provided them political asylum and shelter and did not allow the Russian Govt. to capture these hard core revolutionaries. Michael Alexander writes, "Colonel Tolstoy, the Minister of the Interior is an obstinate sort of man, who never loses sight of the great grievance, he considers Russia has against England, complaints of harbouring of Nihilist Refugees such as Hartman."

The Russians thought that the Britishers were determined to cause immense harm to them. Professor William Langer aptly remarks, "writing in June 1884. Giers pointed out that England had always striven to ruin Russian sea-power, especially in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean."

The Russians on the other hand, thought that advance in Central Asia was simply to strengthen her defences. Professor William Langer notes that "At the bottom, Russian policy was wholly defensive." Our August Master (Alexander III) does not cherish hostile intentions towards England, either in Asia or in Europe "And again in July 1884: Our movements in Central Asia have been commanded by our own interest... At present we have, through great scarifices, reached the stage where we can consider our security fully guaranteed. We can, therefore, content ourselves with consolidating this position."

Some Russian politicians and diplomats thought, if they could give an impression that they were going to attack India, it would stop England from adopting anti - Russia policy in the areas around Turkey. "It is fairly clear that the Russian Government estimated at their full value the difficulties of actually attacking India and it is reasonable to suppose that the invasion project was not seriously entertained in St. Petersburg. But the threat of an attack was of supreme value for Russian



policy. Pressure in the Near East could always be alleviated by an advance in central Asia. The idea is well expressed in the correspondence that passed at the time between the Russian foreign minister, Giers and the ambassador at London, Baron de Staal. There was a very strong lobby in Russia which wanted the Govt. to follow anti-British policy. They wanted Russia to advance as much as possible in Central Asia towards Afghanistan. In words of Professor William Langer, "There was stormy enthusiasm of the officers on the spot, who frequently exceeded their instructions." Although Giers wanted to avoid friction but the nationalist and military groups in St. Petersburg were preventing the government from pursuing a conciliatory policy.

In those days, the boundaries and extent of Afghanistan were not clearly defined. Afghan ruler claimed that certain areas historically belonged Afghanistan, while the Russians claimed that those areas were a part Russian Empire. Britain who wanted to keep the Russians as far away as could be possible, supported the Afghan ruler. The peculiar danger of the situation arose from the fact that no one knew where the boundaries of Afghanistan and Russia met. The Ameer himself showed little interest to discipline the insubordinate tribes of the frontiers and even though the English and Russian Governments had, in 1875, come to a general agreement as to which provinces were to be regarded as part of the Afghan territory, there was no knowledge as to the actual boundaries of the provinces."

In 1884, Russia occupied Meru and it became quite clear that Russia was advancing towards Afghanistan and India, when, in February, 1884, the Russian Tsar accepted the allegiance of the Turkoman tribes of Merv, England was afflicted with nervousness. The Russians were rapidly approaching Afghanistan, a client of England, and a state which the English government had repeatedly promised to defend against any unprovoked attack.



With such a state of Russo-British relations, Maharaja Duleep Singh had enough justification to hope for Russian aid for an expedition to liberate India. By then, the Indians also had much to resent the British presence in the sub-continent. Many Indian Princes were angry with the British government as many of them had been removed on flimsy charges of mal-administration. Many others who had lost their case in the courts, cursed the British Government for economic & financial exploitation. They realized the alarming consequences of drainage theory.

Warm Reception was given to Maharaja Duleep Singh when he came to Calcutta to see his mother in 1861. Sikh soldiers who had gone to China for fighting in the Second Opium War, on their return to Calcutta, made Maharaja Duleep Singh believe that he could succeed in displacing the British from India.

Maharaja Duleep Singh wrote, "There is a terrible storm gathering in India. I know that the advent of Russia is hailed with intense joy both by the people and princes of India in their secret hearts." He had also written to lady Login, "The advance of Russia is watched with intense joy by many princes of India, whom you believe to be loyal." Thus both International and Indian factors gave much encouragement to Maharaja Duleep Singh to believe that if Russia agreed to invade India and the Maharaja was allowed to accompany that force, the invading army would receive a rousing reception from the Indians.

Entire Ireland formed a part of United Kingdom then. Many Irish Patriots were waging a long struggle for the independence of Ireland. Some of them had adopted violent methods. One group; of these Irish patriots was known by the name of Fenians. They had tried to blow up some of the Government buildings. In 1882 Phoenix Park murders had taken place. The British Government came down heavily on them and many an Irish revolutionary were hanged, some fled the country. One such



group was very active in Paris. They avowedly supported all anti-British movements. Soon contact was established between Maharaja Duleep Singh and those Irish exiles. When the Russian Embassy declined to give Passport to Maharaja Duleep Singh, two brothers Patrick and James Casey, came to the rescue of the Maharaja. James Casey gave his own Passport to the Maharaja. The Irish revolutionaries also helped him to get all his proclamations published from a press.

In Russia itself Mikhail Nikiforovich Katkoff, editor of the Moscow Gazette and a very strong supporter of Russian Expansionist Party became a staunch supporter of Duleep Singh. Although Russian Embassy refused to give any encouragement or permission to Maharaja Duleep Singh, Katkoff on his own invited the Maharaja to Moscow.

On 21st. March, 1887, the Maharaja left Paris for Russia by train. His party included the Maharaja, a young English girl Ada Wetherhill and Arur Singh, who had been promoted to the rank of honorary A.D.C. On 22nd March 1887, a great mishap took place. While changing trains, Maharaja lost his portfolio. It is most likely that some British Secret Agent deprived him of his suitcase. It contained not only the Passport but it also contained £500 currency notes, 498 Sovereigns and 3,00 French francs. Thus Maharaja became penniless and had no passport with him. In this desperate state, he contacted Katkoff, who came to his rescue. Katkoff used his influence with General Bogdanovitch, a leading member of a military faction, favouring expansionism, to order the frontier police to allow the Maharaja to enter Russia.

The Maharaja stayed for nearly twenty months in Russia. He had left Paris on 21th March, 1887 and came back to Paris in November 1888. His activities may briefly be summarised as follows;

- (i) **Meeting with Katkoff:** The first thing that he did on his arrival at Mosow, was to meet Katkoff, who had invited him



to Russia. A number of secret meetings were held and plans for the future were drawn.

**(ii) An effort to meet the Russian Emperor Alexander III:**

He sought an interview with the Russian Emperor. The official Russian policy as enunciated by Giers, the foreign minister of Russia, was to maintain good relations with England, therefore the Tsar gave the reply "that was not desirable."

**(iii) A long letter to the Emperor:** The Maharaja then wrote a very long letter to the Tsar which has been published by Late Dr. Ganda Singh in *Duleep Singh Correspondence* (Pbi. University, Patiala).

Like many other patriots, Maharaja Duleep Singh realized that Indians were living under cruel foreign domination and had to undergo all kinds of hardships and sufferings. He wanted that Indians should overthrow the foreign yoke but realized that timid and unarmed Indians could not themselves expel the Britishers, who had a very powerful army to support. Therefore he wanted the assistance of a strong foreign power. He wrote, "Before proceeding to lay before the Imperial government the humble prayer of both of the princes and people of India for deliverance from British oppression, I think it necessary to state here that for myself I seek no gain whatsoever, for I am a patriot and only seek to deliver some 250,000,000 (Twenty five crore) of my countrymen from the cruel yoke of the British Rule." In the end, he again requested the government of Russia to invade India to free Indians from foreign domination and pointed out that personally he would not mind if after liberation of the country, he was not given any personal reward or an office in the government of Independent India. He wrote, "I have been deputed simply to make an appeal on behalf of 250,000,000 countrymen for the deliverance from cruel yoke of the British rule and having done so, my duty is finished."



Maharaja Duleep Singh goes on to say, "The Imperial Government, whether it thinks proper to invade India or not or to employ me or not, can please itself in the matter for it is no concern of mine." Thus he wanted to make it quite clear to the Russian government that he was making a request for invading India simply not because the British Government had rejected his personal claims, but was doing it for the sake of twenty five crores of Indians, whom he wanted to be free like the Russians."

Many Indian nationalist leaders have laid stress on economic and financial exploitation of India during the colonial rule. Some of them have given it the name of 'Drain Theory'. Maharaja Duleep Singh had also come to this conclusion. In his historic letter to the Russian Emperor, he elucidated this point. He found that there were three methods of this loot:

- i) **Payment of high salaries:** The Britishers were paying very high salaries to the civil and military officers, who were all Englishmen.
- ii) **High rate of interest:** The Britishers had invested money on the construction of railway lines and many other projects where the rate of interest was very high and this interest was being paid out of Indian Treasury.
- iii) **Exploitation of Indian Trade and Industry:** The Britishers had formulated their commercial and industrial policies in such a manner that Britishers were prospering at the cost of the Indians.

Maharaja Duleep Singh wrote, "The British raise an annual revenue from the country (India) to the tune of some 50,000,000 to 60,000,000 sterling, out of which an army of 10,000 European officers and English civilians (who receive very high salaries) absorb at least 25,000,000 sterling. The rest is employed in the administration of the country and in the payment of interest upon capital advanced by England for the construction of rail-road and upon the Public debt of India and pensions to officials in



England. Also the import and export trade between England and India amounting to some 50,000,000 per annum each way would be secured to Russia. India is indeed a gold mine to England and most of her wealth is derived from that source."

He wanted to assure the Russians that if they were to invade India, they would get full co-operation from the Indian armies of native Princes and the Indians in the British army would also rebel against the British Officers and would join hands with the invading forces. He also assured the Russians that many Indians would come forward to destroy all sources of strength of the British army by destroying bridges and railway lines.

Maharaja Duleep Singh also had a high hope that when he would arrive on the borders of Punjab (which in those days touched Afghanistan as the province of North Western Frontier had not yet been carved out), people would rise in revolt against the British usurpers who had deprived Duleep Singh of his kingdom. The Maharaja calculated that there were 45,000 Punjabi soldiers in the British Indian army. All of them were likely to throw away British allegiance on his arrival and join his ranks.

The Maharaja thought that he was very popular amongst the Punjabis because of his heritage and his presence would assure them that the Russians had come to India not to replace the Britishers, but had come to liberate the Indians. In his letter to the Russian Emperor Alexander III, Maharaja Duleep Singh wrote, "Through my cousin Sardar Thakur Singh (a man well known both in the Punjab and mostly all over India), I have been deputed by most of the powerful Princes of India to come to Russia to pray before the Imperial Govt. to take their case in hand. These princes possess altogether some 300,00 soldiers in their service and are prepared to revolt, should the Imperial Government think proper to make an advance upon the British provided that I, their representative be permitted to accompany the Imperial Army so as to assure them of the generous and



gracious intentions entertained towards them by the Emperor, for the English have taken good care to fill the minds of the people of India (who are extremely ignorant) with false reports as to the oppressive nature of the Russian Rule, though the British Government itself has broken solemn engagements wherever it suited its own purpose to do so—having broken treaties with myself alone.. ”

“I guarantee an easy conquest of India, for besides the promised assistance of the Prince of India with their armies, it is in my power to raise Punjab in revolt and cause the inhabitants to attack in their rear, the British forces sent to oppose Imperial Army.”

“Under these circumstances no British army could hold on its own, however, powerful it might be (which it is not), being attacked both in front or behind.

“It may not, perhaps be out of place with due modesty to state here why I have some power over my countrymen and can render such invaluable services to the Imperial Government in the way described above. In the first place I am the acknowledged head and sovereign of some 20,000,000 (of which about 8,000,000 are Sikhs) people of entire Punjab, a country inhabited by the most warlike races of India and are all loyal to me. Secondly, the last teacher of the Sikhs prophesied somewhere about 1725 (should be about 1700) regarding myself and has mentioned me by name in his prophecy. He has besides other matters predicted also of a man bearing my name would after becoming deposed (dispossessed) of all he had inherited and after residing alone in a foreign country for a long time, would return and with the aid of an European power free the Sikhs from the cruel bondage that they would be then suffering under for their sins.”

“Therefore, a great deal can be made out of the Prophecy if properly worked, as the predicted time of its fulfillment is near



at hand and the people of the country are extremely ignorant as already stated.”

“..... Furthermore, if I may be permitted, I would venture to state that, should the invasion of India be entertained in the Imperial Councils, an army not less than 2,000,000 men and 2,000 cannons be provided for that purpose. Not that this force is at all necessary for the conquest of India but to impress the wavering Princes and people of that country of the greatness of the resources of Russia and thus half the battle would be gained.

“... Should the Imperial Government, however think proper to turn its attention towards the conquest of India and desire my services for that purpose, I would suggest that 2 or 3 gentlemen speaking English well; should be appointed both to further discuss the matter with me and to enquire into the truth of the assertions I have made with regard to India.”

Maharaja Duleep Singh understood quite clearly that the Russians would not embark upon Indian expedition unless they were convinced that they would reap a good harvest of their invasion. He also knew that a very strong party in Russia was more interested in the Black Sea and wanted to take full advantage of the likely death of the “Sick man of Europe ” (Turkey). He wanted to win over that group of the Russians by pointing out that the Indian expedition was likely to bring much greater financial profit.

Maharaja Duleep Singh wrote, “Among the many advantages that would accrue to the Imperial Government by invasion of India are the following:

“The Princes of India, when freed and allowed to manage their affairs in their own way, would join together and pay a large tribute annually into the Russian treasury. Although I am authorized to name only 3,000,000 per annum, yet in my opinion after the setting down of the country, they would easily pay between 8,000,000 and 10,000,000... India is indeed a gold mine



to England and most of her wealth has been derived from that source. I have been much struck already during my very short stay in Russia with the low value of things in this country for want (in my opinion) of suitable markets for their disposal."

"With all humility I would endeavour to dissuade the Imperial government from regarding complications in the South East Europe for the present, because many are united to oppose the realization of its wishes in that quarter but to turn its entire attention upon the conquest of India and upon crushing England. For by wresting India out of the hands of England, the Imperial Government will acquire a source of Great wealth, whereas I greatly doubt that so much will be gained by taking Constantinople."

It is true that the official Russian policy was not in favour of coming into clash with England on India issue. Mr. N. Giers, the Russian foreign Minister was deadly against any invasion of India, but there were some persons like Katkoff, editor of Moscow Gazette, who whole heartedly supported Maharaja Duleep Singh.

Alexander III, the Russian Emperor was not hostile to the views of the Maharaja. He felt that in case the relations between England and Russia again become strained as they had become during Penjdeh clash, the Government should think seriously about the proposal of an invasion of India.

Late Principal K.S. Thapar and Michael Alexander have seen the notings by the Russian Emperor himself in his own hand on the letter of Maharaja Duleep Singh, which prove that the Russian Emperor had taken this letter seriously as suggesting an alternative course for the future.

Michael Alexander writes, "That the Tsar took the dubious claims of the letter seriously is indicated from the notes on its margin: to the suggestion that the Maharaja was anxious to become his loyal subject he noted: 'It is desirable;' regarding the claim that the princes were all behind him, the Tsar, giving his first sign of perspicacity, wrote, 'It would be desirable to verify



this fact' and to the suggestion that English speaking gentlemen be appointed to 'discuss the matter' the Tsar noted, 'It can be done.' As the Party opposing Duleep Singh was very strong and his main supporter Katkoff died in August 1887, Maharaja could not achieve much at that time. Despite heavy odds, the Maharaja continued to make incessant efforts to seek Russian support. The following will provide glimpse of his various efforts:

- i) **Letters to Thakur Singh :** He had left British India and was living in the French colony of Pondicherry. He was carrying on a vigorous campaign in favour of Maharaja Duleep Singh. On his arrival in Russia, Maharaja sent him a letter appointing him, as his Prime Minister.
- ii) **Departure of Arur Singh to India:** Arur Singh was a man of great confidence and he was a close associate of Maharaja Duleep Singh and his stay with the Maharaja could be of much personal convenience to the Maharaja, but some very reliable person had to be sent to India to contact different sympathetic chiefs and under the circumstances, the Maharaja decided to send Arur Singh to India. He left Moscow in May 1887 and arrived in Calcutta on 22nd August, 1887. Very unfortunately the all resourceful British C.I.D. was able to arrest him within three days of his arrival on 5th August, 1887. Many valuable documents were captured from his person by the British officials.
- iii) **A message to the Indian Chiefs:** A message or proclamation was issued from Moscow, seeking their help during proposed Russian Invasion.
- iv) **Message to the people of India to rise against the Britishers:** Another proclamation was issued that the Maharaja was coming towards India and the people should be prepared to join hands with him on his actual arrival.
- v) **Letter to Wajid Ali Shah:** A letter was sent to Wajid Ali Shah informing him that the Maharaja was coming to deliver him from British imprisonment.



- vi) Many other Letters were also drafted and were sent to the different chiefs. Many of them were intercepted by the British Intelligence Service. Some of them were destroyed by the persons who had been given these letters and had been entrusted with the task of delivery of these letters, because British C.L.D. was arresting a large number of suspected persons.
- vii) **Illness and death of Katkoff:** Perhaps the Maharaja might have been able to do much more work, had Mr. Katkoff not fallen ill seriously in July, 1887. He died in August, 1887, thereby depriving the Maharaja of the benefit of a close friend,
- viii) **Shortage of Money:** Maharaja had lost nearly all the money during the theft at Berlin Railway station. He badly needed money but money was not received from India. With a very great difficulty, he was able to pull on. He shifted from Hotel Billow to a private house called Paris.
- ix) The English girl, who had accompanied him from Paris, was pregnant and gave birth to a daughter on 26th December, 1887. This affair also held up the Maharaja in Moscow for sometime.
- x) **Frustration and disappointment:** Thakur Singh died on 18 August 1887. No substantial help came from any quarter. The Russian Government owing to the policy of not spoiling relations with England, was not prepared to give a serious consideration to his proposal of an attack upon India. Thus not much hope was left of the Russian Project.
- xi) **Arrest of Abdul Rasul :** Abdul Rasul, a clever Kashmiri youth who was appointed to carry secret messages and letters of the Maharaja started from Moscow in December, 1887. After passing through Egypt, he came to India and was finally arrested in Bombay in January 1890.
- All this was frustrating for the Maharaja who started on his back



journey in May, 1888. He left Moscow for Kiev and stayed there for sometime..., then he went towards Odessa. From there he journeyed towards Paris and reached there on 3rd November, 1888.

In spite of the best efforts of Maharaja Duleep Singh, Russia did not agree to attack India. Perhaps biggest factor that stalled the way of Duleep Singh was British secret services. Every British Officer, wherever he was posted, was very alert and without any delay; he transmitted every piece of information, which he obtained from any source to the highest authority. Everyone connected with Maharaja Duleep Singh's plans was being closely watched by the service in every part of the world. Thus before anything could materialize, the Britishers were able to liquidate it.

The princes of India on whom Duleep Singh had high hopes turned out to be cowards and ease loving. They were not prepared to risk the loss of their fiefs and principalities. On the other hand they shamefacedly displayed loyalty to the Queen and the British officials. Perhaps, this was because of the fact that the failure of the revolt of 1857 was too close as yet and sufficient in-put and time was needed to give the Indians fresh confidence and inspiration to launch a new offensive against the British. On the other hand, Maharaja Duleep Singh himself began to show signs of exhaustion. He had received a serious financial set back. He had virtually become penniless. With great difficulty he had spent eighteen months in Russia. Arur Singh's arrest had resulted in cutting off any possible financial help from India. Death of Thakur Singh in Pondicherry came as a damper for any of his future plans and hopes. He had also decided not to accept any allowance from Russian government. Moreover, his main supporter Mr. Katkoff unfortunately fell seriously ill in July 1887 (within three months of Duleep Singh's arrival in Russia) and died soon after, giving a deadly blow to the Maharaja's plans.

The events within Russia also did not favour Maharaja Duleep Singh. While one party led by expansionists like Katkoff



advocated an aggressive Imperial policy, there were others like Russian Foreign Minister Nicholas Giers, who strongly favoured maintenance of peace with England. Wihelm Kotzbue, the Russian Ambassador in Paris stated the views of the Russian Government in these words in a letter to Maharaja Duleep Singh, "Highness, The Imperial Government protects peace. It wants it and maintains it in its own vast possessions; it desires the same in those of the other powers and feels that governments are jointly responsible in their effort of guaranteeing among the people the benefactions of security and stability of institutions. Far from it, hence, the thoughts of favouring or provoking troubles in India."

"No reason impels it and your Highness would not find the means necessary to realise plans of insurrections or vengeance."

The outbreak of Nihilism in Russia, a very strong terrorist and revolutionary movement also prevented the Russian Govt. from taking recourse to a major offensive. At this very time came the report of Russian spy Jamaludin, appointed to assess the situation in India. He had a chance-altercation with Maharaja Duleep Singh and gave a very unfavourable report to the Russian Foreign Minister about Duleep Singh's influence over the Indians. Some other Russian spies also gave reports that the Indians were not prepared for a major revolt.

No wonder ! the Maharaja could not succeed in his Russian mission under such circumstances. But the Russian visit of Duleep Singh had its significance. It caused much worry to the British Foreign Office. It realized that an attack from Russian frontier on Indian borders was not out of question. The Britishers took all diplomatic measures to avert such an eventuality. The Indian administration took all effective measures for scrapping of the possible links. On the other hand, it showed a way to the future revolutionaries of India that foreign help was crucial for them. Raja Mahender Partap, Rash Behari Bose, General Mohan



Singh, M. N. Roy, Subhash Chandra Bose and many others tried to win the support of foreign powers. The surrender of a large number of Indian soldiers in Singapore during the second world war, the attempt of Gen. Mohan Singh and Subhash Chandra Bose to organise Indian National Army and attack India with the help of the Japanese to liberate India, were some such events that were enacted along the lines indicated by Maharaja Duleep Singh.

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## XIII

COINAGE DURING THE REIGN OF  
MAHARAJA DULEEP SINGH*Gurpreet Singh*

Numismatics—the study of coins—has always played a vital role not only in ascertaining historical facts, but also in discovering previously unknown rulers, their kingdoms and their influences. In some cases, even the history of a particular dynasty is largely based upon its coinage. For example, a detailed study of the coins of the Naga Kings of Padmavati by Shri H.H. Trivedi helped him to identify and discover several hitherto unknown and undiscovered Naga Kings. Numismatics has also been helpful in determining the influence of different rulers at different times and at different places. Sometimes a new find in numismatics changes the whole perspective of existing beliefs. On the other hand, sometimes, lack of actual numismatic evidence has led to much speculation and a lot of controversy. A classic example is that of *Hari Singhee* coins supposedly got minted by Hari Singh Nalwa in his own name during his governorship of Kashmir. One has still to come across such a coin. Despite this, many historians are of the firm opinion that such coins did exist.

Most of the study in numismatics by historians, it appears, is based; not much upon the actual study of the coins but upon the work done by others. Numismatics offer a first hand information of the historical facts, and provides an opportunity to present history without distortions and as much close to reality



as possible. Few attempts have been made to study numismatics as supportive evidence of contemporary history. Its interaction with history has often been neglected.

Sikh numismatics i.e. the study of the coins of the Sikhs, despite certain limitations, has been very helpful in ascertaining the influence of the Sikhs and Sikh rulers in various regions of the Punjab at different times. The words "Sikhs" and "Sikh rulers" have required a separate mention because even before the establishment of the Sikh Kingdom by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Sikhs held sway over the vast territories of the Punjab in the form of several Misls or some local chiefs who had minted their own coins. Since the history of the Sikhs is very recent, events of the period have been well-documented by various authors, mainly historians and adventurers. In particular, the period of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his successors has received special attention. But, unfortunately, the numismatic aspect of the Sikh history has been overlooked; if not neglected, by those engaged in the study of this period. No proper records of the mints established by the Sikh rulers and their methods of working are available. This has led to much speculation about the origin of different types of coins and different marks inscribed on them.

The best aspect of Sikh numismatics, vis-a-vis contemporary rulers in the other part of India, is that virtually all silver coins minted at different mints bear the year of issue very clearly in Vikrami Samvat<sup>1</sup>. Because of this, the coins pertaining to the period of Maharaja Duleep Singh can be easily identified and classified. These coins have some peculiar and interesting features of their own.

As we know, Maharaja Duleep Singh was enthroned as the ruler of Punjab in September, 1843 (VS 1900), following a bloody trail of events. At that time he was barely 5 year old. The coins issued from September, 1843 till the date of annexation of Punjab by the British on 20th March, 1849 are attributed to the period of



Maharaja Duleep Singh. Whereas legibility of the year of issue of the coins is a positive aspect of the Sikh silver coins, a major drawback has been that there has been no perceptible change in the type, design and patterns of these coins over the years. Since putting one's own name on a coin was considered against Sikh religious tenents, almost all Sikh silver coins, minted at Lahore, Amritsar or Multan were Nanakshahis<sup>2</sup> or Gobindshahis<sup>3</sup>. Due to this, coins of a particular year could not be ascribed with conviction to a particular ruler, especially during transition of power from one ruler to the other, as it happened between AD 1839, the year when Maharaja Ranjit Singh died, and 1843, the year Maharaja Duleep Singh was enthroned as the ruler of Punjab. During these four years as many as four rulers figure as rulers of Punjab. The coins of all these years are available, but still these coins cannot be attributed to an individual ruler. However, coins minted between AD 1844 (VS 1901) and AD 1849 (VS 1906) can be safely attributed to the reign of Maharaja Duleep Singh. Only the coins of AD 1843 (VS 1900) retain an ambiguous position. Whereas prior to the assassination of Sher Singh in 1843 the coins bearing the year VS 1900 (AD 1843) should be attributed to Sher Singh, the coins bearing the same year VS 1900, and those minted between September to December 1843, have to be attributed to Maharaja Duleep Singh's period. Since the same coins remained in currency even during the transition of power from Maharaja Sher Singh to Maharaja Duleep Singh, a border line cannot be drawn as to which coin belongs to each of the two. This is also indicative of the smooth organisation and high efficacy of the mints, which continued to mint coins uninterrupted even when Punjab was in a state of turmoil.

Almost all the mints which had been working during Maharaja Ranjit Singh's period continued to mint the coins during Maharaja Duleep Singh's period. The only exception was the Peshawar mint, of which no coin is in evidence after VS 1894 (AD 1837).

The year on the reverse of the coins from Amritsar and



Lahore mints is found to be frozen since VS 1884 (AD 1827) and VS 1885 (AD 1828). The actual year in which a coin was struck is found on the Obverse in very small and conspicuous, but distinctly legible, digits. Many explanations have been put forward to explain the reason for this peculiarity. But the most plausible explanation appears to be that Maharaja Ranjit Singh fell seriously ill in AD 1827, and the illness got prolonged. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was a highly superstitious man. His astrologers advised him that by freezing the year on his coins he could stop time and thereby attain longevity. In the light of this fact; the explanation holds good enough. But it is difficult to explain why this practice continued even after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh till the end of Sikh Rule i. e. the day of annexation of Punjab by the British in A. D. 1849.

When we talk about the coinage of Maharaja Duleep Singh's period, we should bear in mind that Duleep Singh was barely 5 years old when he was installed as the ruler of Punjab. It was his mother Rani Jindan who, as his regent, looked after the state affairs. The study of the coins of the period suggests that no appreciable change in the type and design of the coins Lahore, Amritsar and Kashmir mints were affected during that period. The following are the broad outlines/details of the coin of the various mints:

**1. Amritsar Mint:** Most of the silver coins of the Amritsar mint are still found in very good condition-rather uncirculated condition. This has led historians and numismatists to speculate that the coins minted at Amritsar were mainly used for religious/ceremonial purposes, rather than for trade purpose. In any case silver rupees minted between AD 1843 (VS 1900) to AD 1849 (VS 1906) are basically continuation of the frozen year series. The Nanakshahis have VS 1885 as the frozen year on the reverse, and VS 1900, 1901, 1902, 1903, 1904 as the year in which the coins were actually struck on the obverse, in conspicuous lettering. The



Gobindshahis have VS 1884 (AD 1827) as the frozen year on the reverse, and VS 1900, 1901, 1902, 1903 and 1904 on the obverse. There appears to be no rupee coin minted by the Amritsar mint in VS 1906 (AD 1849), the last year of Maharaja Duleep Singh's period. Also, no Gobindshahi coin is in evidence of the year VS 1905 (AD 1848) from Amritsar mint.

Nanakshahi 1/2 rupee is in evidence from VS 1900 to 1905 (AD 1843 to 1848), 1/4 rupee of VS 1901 to 1904 (AD 1844 to 1847) is known, 1/8 rupee of VS 1900 and 1903 is also known. All these fractional coins are with frozen year VS 1885.

There appears to be at least one serious attempt at providing an individual identity to the coins of Maharaja Duleep Singh's period, by the Amritsar mint, in the year AD 1847 (VS 1904). Only one type of Gobindshahi silver coins was struck with the frozen year VS 1888 (AD 1831) on the reverse were minted in VS 1904 (AD 1847). This provides a special identity to the period of Maharaja Duleep Singh through coins. Again, in retrospect, this coin could have been minted elsewhere with mint name, Amritsar. Copper coins of Amritsar mint that can be specifically attributed to Maharaja Duleep Singh's period are not in evidence. It is possible that copper coins during this period continued with the frozen year VS 1885, because although the year VS 1885 remained frozen, the mint marks found on these coins resemble with those found on silver coins of VS 1900 to 1903. However, coins of VS 1900 and 1901 are in evidence. These copper coins bear legend in Urdu on one side, and in Gurmukhi on the other side. Numismatists are not certain whether these belong to Amritsar mint or Lahore mint (Mr. S.P. Bhandari, a numismatist of repute, is convinced that these belong to Amritsar mint. He showed me the rubbing of a coin in his collection whereby the mint was partly but clearly, legible as Amritsar in Punjabi).

**2. Lahore Mint:** Silver rupees of Lahore mint continued in circulation with the same type and style as those during the period



of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and even prior to it. These have Nanakshahi couplet on the obverse with the year, in which struck, given inconspicuously. On the reverse is the frozen year VS 1885. The only coins known to be in evidence are of the year VS 1902 and VS 1903 (AD 1845 and 1846, respectively). It is significant to note that there is no coin of Lahore mint in evidence after VS 1903 (AD 1846). We know that the British regency at Lahore took over the affairs of state in December 1846. It is very much possible that they either discouraged or disallowed minting of new coins at Lahore.

Copper coins from Lahore mint are not individually distinguishable to be related to any particular period. No particular coin can be assigned to Maharaja Duleep Singh's period. Not that copper coins were not minted during this period, but, apparently no attempt was made to provide them a distinct identity.

**3. Kashmir Mint :** Silver coins minted in Kashmir have a distinction of having individual mint marks of most of the governors from Diwan Kirpa Ram in VS 1883 (AD 1826) onwards. During VS 1900 (AD 1843) to VS 1902 (AD 1845) Sheikh Ghulam Mohyi-ud-din was the governor of Kashmir. During VS 1902 (AD 1845)-VS 1903 (AD 1846) Shiekh Iman-ud-din, Amir-ul-Mulk Bahadur was the governor of Kashmir. Silver coins during the tenure of these two governors are identified by an Urdu alphabet letter, (ش) (*Shin*) mark on them. Significantly, in this case also there are no silver coins known to exist after AD 1846 (VS 1903). It is well known that in March 1846, Kashmir was handed over to Gulab Singh by the British as a reward for his treacherous role in the Sikh wars. In case of copper coins of Kashmir, there are none in evidence which can be attributed to Maharaja Duleep Singh's period with ceretainity. Not that copper coins were not minted during that period. But unfortunately, it appears no attempt was made to provide them an identity of their own; to enable us to relate them to Duleep Singh's period.



4. **Multan Mint:** During the reign of Maharaja Duleep Singh in Punjab, Multan was moving through highly turbulent events. Sawan Mal, who was appointed the governor of Multan in 1829, by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, got assassinated in 1844, his son Diwan Mul Raj succeeded him. He objected to the huge amount of 'narxana' demanded by the British regency in lieu of confirmation of his succession. Later he agreed to pay rupees 180,000 but eventually could not pay. Two British missionaries along with governor designate Kahan Singh were assassinated at *Idgab* of Multan. Mul Raj rewarded the murderers and rebelled against the British. This gave an excuse to the British to attack Multan and convert this local revolt into a war against the state and thus annex Punjab. Multan was invested by British forces in September, 1848 and stormed on January, 1849. Consequently Mul Raj surrendered.

The purpose of the above narration is to convey to the reader that any coins minted during this period from Multan mint were totally independent from British influence. The silver rupees of Multan mint are known to exist for the years VS 1900 to 1905 (AD 1843 to 1848). These have Nanakshahi couplet on the obverse and the legend *ZARB DAR AL-AMAN MULTAN JULUS MAIMANAT MANUS* (struck at Multan, the abode of safety in the year ... of the prosperous reign). The reverse carries the year in which struck. Fractional coins (i. e. 1/2 rupee or 1/4 rupee) may have been minted, but are not in evidence for the years of Maharaja Duleep Singh's period. Copper paisa of the year VS 1904 is in evidence. This is also a Nanakshahi coin with the Nanakshahi couplet on the obverse.

5. **Dera Mint:** Dera refers to Dera Ghazi Khan. Silver rupees of Dera mint are extremely rare. These have still not been deciphered convincingly. These rupees bear frozen year VS 1884 on the reverse and another year on the obverse. The years which have been read on the obverse are VS 1894 [Rupee from the collection of Saran



Singh]; VS (1904) [Rodger's Leiah Rupee] and VS (1904) [Rodger's Dera Rupee], the digits given in small brackets are absent. Therefore, only numeral 4 is found on each of these. Could we have the liberty to speculate that the year on all these refers to VS 1904 (zero missing on Saran Singh's rupee being illegible) ? Since Dera Ghazi Khan together with Mankera was a part a Multan, it is possible that in VS 1904 (AD 1847) Diwan Mul Raj started a mint there to strengthen his rebellion against the British. No other coin of Dera mint is known to be in evidence.

**6. Derajat Mint:** Derajat or Dera Ismail Khan was the name given to alluvial plain with Dera Ismail Khan in the north, Dera Fateh Khan in the centre and Dera Ghazi Khan in the South, bordered in the east by river Indus and by Sulaiman mountain range in the west.

Silver coins (rupees) minted in Derajat mint during Maharaja Duleep Singh's period are in evidence of the years VS 1900 to 1904 (AD 1843 to 1847). Rupee of VS 1905 (AD 1848) is also reported. The inscription is probably Gobindshahi, which is never more than partly legible, in several slightly varying arrangements, on the obverse. The reverse has the year inscribed in VS with mint name in Persian legend.

Copper coins of Maharaja Duleep Singh's period are not in evidence. Even if these existed they are still to be traced.

**7. Nanakshahi Mint :** In my opinion, this must be the most important mint in relation to period of Maharaja Duleep Singh. The reason for this assumption is that this mint struck silver rupees of the years VS 1904 and 1905 (AD 1847 and 1848, respectively) only (Till date silver rupees with only these two years are known). The obverse of these coins has a Nanakshahi couplet inscribed on it, similar to those of Amritsar mint. The reverse of the rupee is exactly similar to that of the Nanakshahi of the Amritsar mint except that in this case the name of the *Zarb* (mint) is read as "NAMAK" by most numismatists. The complete

name of the mint has been suggested "NAMAK SHAHI" by some numismatists, but is still to be ascertained. In one of the coins of VS 190, the letters रा म जी म appears on the obverse. Numismatists are still to say with conviction whether these letters are in the Gurmukhi script or in Dev Nagri script.

The literary meaning of the word "NAMAK" means salt. It has been suggested that these coins were probably minted in the salt range.

I have earlier said that among these coins silver rupees appear to be the most important coins in relation to the period of Maharaja Duleep Singh. My assumption is based on the fact that during these two years (i.e. AD 1847 and 1848) the British regency was managing the affairs of Punjab. They could never have permitted new mints. This mint definitely was a product of the rebellious proceedings, then remained in operation in certain parts of Punjab.

For illustrations, see Annextures page 167-73.

## NOTES

1. VS or Vikrami Samvat. AD year can be arrived at by subtracting 57 from the VS.
2. Nanakshahi: Originally the couplet containing the following text in Persian was used on Nanakshahi: *SIKHAZAD BAR SIM'O ZAR FAZL SACHCHA SAHIB AST FATEH-E GOBIND SINGH-E-SHAHAN TEG-E-NANAK WAHIB AST* (Coins struck in silver and gold by the grace of the true lord; of the victory of Gobind, Lion of Kings, Nanak's sword is the provider). The same couplet was used with slight variation from time to time.
3. Gobindshahi: The couplet containing the following text in Persian was used on Gobindshahi coins with slight variations from one mint to the other and from one period to the other.  
*DEG TEGH O FATEH NUSRAT BE-DARANG  
 YAFT AZ NANAK GURU GOBIND SINGH*  
 (abundance, power and victory, assistance without delay are the gifts of Nanak (and) Guru Gobind Singh).



# **ANNEXTURE A** **SILVER COINS OF AMRITSAR MINT** **(Maharaja Duleep Singh Period)**

## **NANAKSHAHIS**

Obverse: Couplet with year in which struck inconspicuous but distinct.

Reverse : VS 1885 frozen

SRI AMRITSAR JI ZARB TAKHT AKAL BAKHT  
 JULUS MAIMANAT MANUS SANAH

**RUPEE : 11.0-11.2 g**



:VS 1885/1900  
 (AD 1828/1843)



:VS 1885/1902  
 (AD 1828/1845)



:VS 1885/1903  
 (AD 1828/1846)



VS 1885/1904  
(AD 1828/1847)



:VS 1885/1905  
(AD 1828/1848)

OTHER YEARS ALSO REPORTED

½ Rupee : 5.5-5.6 g



:VS 1885/1900  
(AD 1828/1843)



:VS 1885/1903  
(AD 1828/1846)

OTHER YEARS ALSO REPORTED Sandhanwalia



¼ Rupee : 2.8 g



:VS 1885/1904  
(AD 1828/1847)

OTHER YEARS ALSO REPORTED

# ANNEXTURE B

## MULTAN MINT

(Maharaja Duleep Singh Period)

SILVER RUPEE: 11.0-11.2g

OBVERSE  
NANAKSHAHI  
COUPLET

است  
سبح نانک و اہب  
فصل سہی صا  
گویند سمنہ ان  
سک زرو بر سیم وزر

REVERSE :

الان ن  
ضد اما ملتا  
(VS year)  
سحب  
طوین منینوین



VS 1900  
(AD 1843)



VS 1905  
(AD 1848)

COINS OF THE YEARS VS 1901, 1902,  
1903, 1904 ALSO KNOWN TO EXIST.



# ANNEXTURE C

## LAHORE MINT

(Maharaja Duleep Singh Period)

SILVER RUPEE: 10.9-11.1 g

OBVERSE: NANAKSHAHI COUPLET WITH YEAR IN WHICH STRUCK.

REVERSE : VS 1885 FROZEN & MINT NAME



:VS 1885/1902  
(AD 1828/1845)

COINS OF THE YEARS ALSO KNOWN TO EXIST.

**ANNEXTURE D**  
**DERA MINT**  
**DERA GHAZI KHAN**  
**(Maharaja Duleep Singh Period)**

**SILVER RUPEE: 11.0-11.1 g**

**OBVERSE :** GOBIND SHAHI COUPLET WITH YEAR IN WHICH ACTUALLY STRUCK.

**REVERSE :** AS AMRITSAR MINT BUT WITH MINT NAME 'DERA' 1885 FROZEN.



:VS 1884/94  
 (AD 1827/....)

**SARAN SINGH'S COLLECTION RUPEE**



:VS 1884/.4  
 (AD 1827/....)

**(RODGERS'S COLLECTION RUPEE)**



## NAMAK MINT (?)

SILVER RUPEE: 11.1 g

OBVERSE: NANAKSHAHI COUPLET

REVERSE: SAME AS NANAKSHAHI OF AMRITSAR  
BUT WITH MINT NAME SUPPOSEDLY  
'NAMAK'



:VS 1905  
(AD 1848)



:VS 1905  
(AD 1848)

ADDITIONAL INSCRIPTION PROBABLY IN HINDI

## XIV

# MAHARAJA DULEEP SINGH'S CONTRIBUTION TO ART AND CULTURE

*Mohan Singh*

Duleep Singh was born on 6<sup>th</sup> September, 1838 and before his birth, portrait paintings and other art activities were in full swing in the Court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Many hill painters from Kangra and Guler were at work in the Sikh Kingdom. There are many references about the existence of paintings in Punjab referred to by European travellers and adventures like Lt. William Barr and Baron Charles Hugel. During the historic meeting between Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Lord William Bentick at Rupar in October 1831, Lord Bentick took along a Delhi Painter, Jiwan Ram and sent him to Maharaja's camp before the formal parade of troops on 26th October for making a faithful picture of the Maharaja. This painting was published in the Punjab Series Vol. II "Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab and Political Life of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, 1897." In this painting Ranjit Singh has been shown in sitting posture resting against two pillows wearing Kohinoor Diamond on his right arm. Ranjit Singh had been painted by many a European painter and the most striking one is the darwing by G. T. Vigne in 1837, which is available in the India Office Library and Records, London. This drawing was brought to Punjab during Bicentenary Celebrations of the Birth of Maharaja Ranjit Singh



for the International Exhibitions organised at Amritsar, Chandigarh, Patiala and Delhi in 1981.

When Emily Eden visited Lahore in December 1838, she painted portraits of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his Courtiers. There is no reference of any painting of a Lady of the Royal House of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Hungarian young oil painter, August Theodor Schoeft who visited Lahore in 1841, did a portrait of Maharani Jindan which has been reproduced by F.S. Aijazuddin in his book, "Sikh Portraits by European Artists."<sup>1</sup> Schoeft also prepared a sketch of child Duleep Singh showing him about three or four years old, sitting on the trunk of a tree, wearing red coloured embroidered *chouga* and holding the hilt of a sword in his right hand. The details of this sketch were completed by him later on as was the custom of the day. This is perhaps the first contemporary portrait of young Duleep Singh.

Like his father, Maharaja Duleep Singh also granted medals and decorations with his portrait fitted in the medal.<sup>2</sup> There is a set of medals of Van-Court-Land in Medal Gallery, Sheesh Mahal Patiala in which the medal with Duleep Singh's portrait is very significant. In the centre of a marvellous sun burnt, the rays are encrusted with rubies and emeralds is a finely executed miniature painting of Duleep Singh, seated in a chair with a radiant halo around his head. The reverse of this medal has exquisite enameled floral patterns inlaid into 'the gold medal has been granted by Maharaja Duleep Singh Sahib Bhadur, the Ruler of Punjab to General Courtland Sahib'. This brilliant gold order is suspended by nine vertical rows of nine natural pearls, perhaps signifying the age of Duleep Singh who has been shown about nine years old in the painting. Below the pearls is a horizontal row of seven uncut rubies, with half orb of gold studded with emeralds and rubies. This might be the smallest painting of Duleep Singh done by *pahari* painters who were in Lahore Court. It is interesting to note that in the same show case, there is



another medal granted by the British Govt. to Courtland for rendering 'services' in the battle of Sabraon. These medals bespeak of the changing of loyalties of the recipient of the medal. Other historical paintings<sup>3</sup> by famous painter Hassan-uddin showing Duleep Singh with his Courtiers, are finely executed. They show Duleep Singh's love for pet dogs. In one of the paintings, Duleep Singh is shown petting a dog sitting in his lap, with his right hand. Other courtiers in the painting are shown to highlight the grandeur of the Court. Von Orlich a German visitor in his travels has recorded that there was a custom in the Sikh Court to draw the portrait of those present on important occasions. He wrote, "It is customary to bring the artist attached to the Court to take the portraits of those present: the Painter of Sher Singh was, therefore, constantly occupied sketching with a lead pencil those likeness of whom were afterwards to be copied in water colours in order that they might adorn the walls of the royal palace, and some of them were admirably executed. I was among the honoured few and the artist was very peculiar in making a faithful representation of my uniform and my hat and feathers."

After the first Sikh war, the British Army crossed the Sutlej and occupied Lahore on 20th February, 1846. Treaty of Lahore was concluded between the Sikhs and the British 9th March, 1846. Treaty of Bhyrowal (Vairowal) which is also known as the 2nd Lahore Treaty was signed on 22nd December 1846. Under this Treaty the British became the real masters of the Punjab and Henry Lawrence was appointed as the British Resident at Lahore. During the minority of Duleep Singh, the administration was to be carried on by the Council of Regency of eight Sikh Sardars acting under the control and guidance of the British Resident. A painting to this testimony is a visual evidence drawn by a court artist of Lahore, which is now in British Museum London. Sitting from left to right in front row are, Henry



Lawrence, Lord Gough (Commander-in-Chief), Lord Hardinge (Governor General), Sheikh Immam-Ud-din, Raja Ranbir Singh son of Raja Gulab Singh Dorga, Maharaja Duleep Singh, Fedrick Currie (Foreign Secretary) and others. To highlight the supremacy of the British, Lord Hardinge is shown sitting in a chair which is dignified with the figures of tigers whose tails serving as chair-arms in contrast to the chair of Maharaja Duleep Singh who is sitting in an ordinary chair resembling the chairs of the Courtiers. It is interesting to note that sadness resembles the chairs of the Courtiers. Equally interesting is the fact that Currie has been shown sitting on the left; in front of Lord Hardinge. Currie's business was to translate the speech of Lord Hardinge and also act as an interpreter between the Sikh and British camps. Duleep Singh has been shown staring at Lord Hardinge with anxiousness and curiosity while sadness prevails on the faces of Sikh Courtiers.

C. S. Hardinge, nephew of the Governor General had prepared a painting of Duleep Singh which was published in his book, 'Recollection of India, 1847' reproduced by W. G. Archer in his Paintings of the Sikhs, Plate 67. Archer has described the face of Duleep Singh, "as blank as a puppet's." Mrs. Mackenzie Halen wife of colonel Colin Mackenzie prepared a sketch of Maharaja Duleep Singh on his request on 30th November, 1849 after the annexation of Punjab. This was published in her book, 'Illustrations of the Mission, the Camp and the Zenana, London 1854' and also reproduced by Archer 'Plate 66'. To quote Mrs. Mackenzie<sup>6</sup>:

"Friday November 30th, the little Maharaja expressed a wish that I should draw him. James accompanied me on an elephant at gun fire. Duleep Singh passed in an open carriage and four, with his fist, escorted by some of Sikinner's Horse, as I took a sketch of the town or rather of Ranjit's tomb and the Jama Masjid. We saw the



Commander-in-Chief and his staff come in, went to the little Maharaja, who richly dressed in yellow velvet and silver with a sort of crimson tunic underneath and magnificent pearls around his throat. I took sketch of him and several of his attendants and he in turn sent native artists who made hideous representation of J. and me.” The following day on Saturday, December 1st, she writes, “Sir H. Lawrance went to fetch the Maharaja and Sir H. Eliot received him alighting, and the Governor General met him at the door of the tent. Duleep looks very handsome and royal. About 53 trays of presents were given to him besides to all the people about him. Lord Dalhousie returned the visit a few days after, but it seems almost a pity that the kindly impulse which prompted him to treat the little prince as a sovereign, for both he and his attendants will be proportionately disappointed at his being sent away to Fauttingar.” On 4th December, 1849, Mrs. Mahaenzie took the second sketch of little Maharaja in the dress he wore at the Durbar and she further says “I thought Lord Dalhousie would like it better. He looked extremely handsome with *Sirpesh* or aigrette of diamonds and wreaths of pearls on his wrist, it is mark of royalty.”

Lord Dalhousie wrote to Lawrence,<sup>7</sup> “I ‘don’t seek for a moment from you that I have seen no reason whatsoever to depart from the opinion that peace and the vital interests of the Punjab require that the power of the Sikh Government should not only be defeated but subverted and their dynasty abolished.” Rani Jindan was banished from Punjab and Dr. Login was appointed as guardian to the young Maharaja; Duleep Singh. To quote Dr. Login<sup>8</sup>, “I was today introduced by John Lord Lawrence to Dalhousie with much warmth and commendation... He appointed today noon for a long conversation with him from which I have just returned, in which he gave me full instructions regarding the



future disposal of the young Maharaja and it was a great relief to the government to have the incharge of him and that the way in which I had acquitted myself both towards him and the Government, was in every way satisfaction to both. He was really very kind and cordial indeed and did not wish me to restrict myself to Futtehghur as a residence but allows me to take him to visit other places whenever I like; and eventually to England."

In a letter<sup>9</sup> from Lahore dated 15th December 1849, Lord Dalhousie has described the love for hawks by Duleep Singh, "the little Maharaja is an engaging little fellow and has quite won my heart. He appears to be happy enjoying his hawks and his fun." Child Duleep Singh has been frequently portrayed with a hawk on his right fist as he had a great passion for this bird, for amusements, "he is passionately fond of hawking and thinks of nothing else. He is busy getting a book done on the subject in Persian with drawings and paintings of all the various species of hawks. This takes up his whole attention and renders him indifferent to all else for the time being. The book is to treat of all the approved ways of training and managing hawks." It was the last desire of Maharaja Duleep Singh to settle in Delhi where he could get to his hawking and shooting. In the memorandum of conversation between Maharaja Duleep Singh and Sir Owen Burne held on 29th January, 1886, Maharaja said,<sup>11</sup> "I have already taken first step to abjure Christianity because I no longer believe in the so called Christian government. I have resolved to go to India in order to settle in Delhi where I can resume my native habits, bring up my children to a livelihood there and get to my hawking and shooting. The Government of India should let me do this. If they touch me, it would shake the Punjab, if not now, at any rate later on, I am determined to go."

Duleep Singh took great interest in drawing and paintings. "He has painters constantly engaged near him at this work, which he watches with deep interest and he himself tries to draw and paint a little."<sup>12</sup>



Duleep Singh continued this interest in Lahore and Fatehgarh. Dr. Login in a letter to his wife has given details in these words,<sup>13</sup> "Little Maharaja has been busy collecting for me drawings and paintings done by his painters, some are very curious and interesting indeed, representing domestic life in Punjab and professions. He has also selected authentic likeness of the great Chiefs and men of note." Duleep Singh gifted some of his portraits with inscriptions in Persian and in English to Mrs. Login which he himself inscribed.

He continued his interest in art and paintings during his stay in England.<sup>14</sup> "His candour and straight forwardness made him a great favourite with Queen Victoria and Prince consort and his outspoken comments on things in general seemed specially amusing to the Prince, who delighted him in driving him out and making talk freely to him... The frequently exchanged drawings to show their studies... The Queen and her consort took great interest in Maharaja's education and well being and latter recommended the teachers and professors he was to have. Professors Bently and Becker for Science and German and Edmond Rembault and W.G. Cusins for music for which Maharaja showed undoubted aptitude and an enthusiastic devotion. He was engaged in writing and producing an opera just before his final departure for England." Duleep Singh presented the Libretto to Mrs. Login. Duleep Singh was also a keen photographer and this hobby was imbibed in him by the Prince of Wales. According to Lady Login the royal brothers arranged to submit themselves to be photographed by Duleep Singh in the lawns in full view of the windows and those photographs, you may be sure are now treasured possessions with me. Duleep Singh had already with the Prince consort's assistance taken several negatives at Osborne "of the royal children in fancy dress and in his India costumes." His love for hunting was well known and took interest in the rearing of birds of different species. According to lady Login,



"His great craze was for all sort of sport specially shooting birds, wherever he finds specimens of each kind to rear and study their habits." He also used to play billiards.<sup>15</sup>

Queen Victoria liked Duleep Singh very much. He was invited to stay with the British royals at Windsor and at Osborne. He used to play with royal children. He was accorded the status and rank of an European Prince and he took precedence at official functions after the royal family. She took fancy in drawing a portrait of Duleep Singh which now is in royal Archives, Windsor Castle, a copy of which is now on display in Maharaja Ranjit Singh Museum, Amritsar. She also got one painting of Duleep Singh commissioned by famous artist Winterhalter.<sup>16</sup> "The sitting took place at Buckingham Palace, the queen and the Princes Consort were much interested in the progress of the work and frequently visited the room arranged as a studio."

During one of the sittings for the portrait, Duleep Singh, was shown the famous diamond *Kohinoor* after giving it a new shape by the Amsterdam's diamond cutters. It was much reduced in shape and luster. Lady Login has described this episode in full details. While returning back the diamond to queen Victoria, Duleep Singh said!?, "It is to me Ma'am greatest pleasure tendering to my sovereign the *Kohinoor*." whereupon he quietly resumed upon his place on the dais and the artist continued his work.

Reacting to this Lord Dalhousie in his letter dated August 26, 1854 writes,<sup>18</sup> "I talked to you about the *Kohinoor* being a present from Duleep to the Queen is errant humbug. He knew as well as I did that it was nothing of the sort; and if I had within a thousand miles of him he would not have dared to utter such a piece of trickery. These beautiful eyes with which Duleep Singh has taken captive the Court, are his mother's eyes those with which she captured and controlled the old Lion of the Punjab."

Winterhalter has remarkably painted Duleep Singh<sup>19</sup> in



typical Punjabi dress with royal costumes and jewellery and this has served as a reference to many European and Indian Painters. A similar copy of which by Paillet forms a part of the collection of princess Bamba, daughter of Duleep Singh, which she bequeathed to her faithful Secretary, Pir Karim Baksh Supra before her death in Lahore on 10th March, 1957.<sup>20</sup> This collection in Lahore Museum includes Schoefft's paintings and other Sikh relics some of which are also on display in the Exhibition in India as already explained above. Lord Dalhousie, who is also known for, 'Violent breach of trust' was also critical of Winter halter's painting of Duleep Singh, He writes.<sup>22</sup> "Winterhalter may have arranged Duleep Singh's drapery better than his valet, but he has preserved him Sikh in outward form, with which drapery has a good deal to do. The decor requires watching. What can be more absurd in fact or worse in taste than adopting the armorial bearings of the chivalry of western Europe for a Prince of an Eastern nation among whom such things are uncommon as a custom."

Duleep Singh was a widely travelled prince and had many faceted personality. His other interests have been discussed by the historians in detail but in the eyes of the Punjabis, he is still recognised and remembered as a child, Maharaja Duleep Singh, the last Sikh Maharaja of Punjab. Upto the third quarter of 19th century even the ivory painters of Delhi and wood-cut painters of Punjab used to do portraits of Duleep Singh, his father Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Maharani Jindan, other Sikh chiefs and nobility with the same beautiful features of Duleep Singh with his hawk and a lapdog. These sets of paintings adorned the walls of the Punjabi drawing rooms with great devotion and reverence. The prints of these paintings were within the reach of the commoners as they priced very low i.e. ½ Anna per set.<sup>23</sup>

Rich tributes were paid in a detailed obituary published in The Tribute dated October 25, 1893 to Maharaja Duleep Singh,



who died at the age of 55 at the Hotel Dela Tremouille in Paris. He was buried next to his wife Maharani Bamba in the Churchyard of the church within the grounds of Elvedon Hall.<sup>24</sup> "He was but a boy when he was banished from his home and country. But we have heard from Punjabi gentlemen who had seen him in England that he had forgotten nothing of his life at Lahore. He loved to talk of the old days and his eyes were filled with tears as he spoke of his play-mates, his 'Teblias' (attendants), his favourite horses and the gorgeously uniformed regiments of infantry consisting of the cadets of the noblest houses of the Punjab that used to be in his 'ardil' (attendance). Wherever he was, in whatever condition he was, there was no diminution in his passionate love for his motherland."<sup>25</sup>

In true sense, he was a patriot to the core of his heart, who was deprived of his mother, mother-tongue and the mother-land by the British.

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11. Ganda Singh, *History of the Freedom Movement in Punjabi: Maharaja Duleep Singh Correspondence*, (Punjabi University, Patiala 1977) p. 228.
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13. *Ibid.*, p. 160.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 116-117.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 113.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
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19. F. S. Aijazudin, *Sikh Portraits by European Artists*, Plate VI.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
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25. *Ibid.*, p. 614.



## REMEMBERING MAHARAJA DULEEP SINGH

*Matak Raj Arora*

# APPENDICES

The policy of annexation followed by the British imperial power was a source of apprehension to our history, which on the historic polity of Queen Victoria, the friend of the imperial British, showed India and its people under great strain.

The story of abduction of the young boy Maharaja Duleep Singh, son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, shows the British efforts to kidnap him. The boy was killed for an ending to the Maharaja Singh. The mother Rani Jodha was taken to Simla, where she lived in a house. He was transported to a small boat on the banks of the Ganges. He was escorted to a monastery on the river of Dr. and Mrs. Logan, where in London and got adopted as a son of Queen Victoria and made to present the picture of a British monarch to declare the crown of Britain.

Queen Victoria, somewhat conscience-stricken about the punishment given to Indian rebels of the Mutiny of 1857, seems to have appeased her own guilt by adopting Duleep Singh as a son and princess of Coorg as a daughter before employing Abdul Karim Khan, a young Afghan prince as a Muslim to reach his Hindustani.

These adoptions were not quick followed by the royal family and members of the high nobility. D. C. the Secretary of State





## 1

## REMEMBERING MAHARAJA DULEEP SINGH

*Mulak Raj Anand*

**A**nniversary of Maharaja Duleep Singh is an occasion when we might recall the bad and the good of British rule in our country.

The policy of annexation followed by the British Imperial power, was a streak of aggradisement to gain territory; which put the humane policy of Queen Victoria, the Head of the Imperial States, towards India and its people under great strain.

The story of abduction of the young boy Maharaja Duleep Singh, heir of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, shows the British authority as kidnapers. The boy was lured for an outing to the Shalimar Bagh. His mother Rani Jindan was taken to Shaikhupura Fortress. Later deposed as Maharaja, he was transported to a small fort on the banks of the Ganges. He was converted to Christianity, put in the care of Dr. and Mrs. Login, taken to London and got 'adopted as a son of Queen Victoria' and made to present the precious *Kohinoor* diamond to decorate the crown of Britain.

Queen Victoria, somewhat conscience stricken about the punishment given to Indian rebels of the Mutiny of 1857, seems to have appeased her own guilt by adopting Duleep Singh as a son and princess of Coorg as a daughter besides employing Abdul Karim Khan, a young Muslim emigre as a Munshi to teach her Hindustani.

These adoptions were not much favoured by the royal family and embarrassed the high colored A. D. C., the Secretary of State

for India and the Viceroy as also, Lord Elgin. All the same, the Queen with a mind of her own, and a heart touched by the tragedies of the killings on both sides, inclined to affection for the adopted Indians as a consolation and appeasement of British guilt.

Duleep Singh was given the status of a Lord, a country house in Suffolk, but just enough money as dole to pay for hospitality to his aristocrat friends twice or thrice a year. The Maharaja went on asking the Secretary of State and the Viceroy for more largessee, suitable for his role as an exalted aristocrat among the Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen. The officials refused any more money than first given and did not increase his allowances.

As he grew up in the court, outwardly favoured and enjoying the affection of Queen Victoria, but aware of the insidious contempt of the officials, Duleep Singh listened to the pleas of his mother, Rani Jindan (who had escaped to Nepal) to come back to India and claim his kingdom.

In chagrin he spent some time in Egypt, married a high-born lady went back to England. He was welcomed by the Queen, who sympathized with his wish to see, and tried to appease his melancholy. But this did not stop him from approaching the Czar of Russia, to seek his help for the liberation of India. He went to Mosow but did not meet with success. Subsequently, Duleep Singh retired to South France where he passed away, inwardly bitter and outwardly calm.

This story about one of the pioneer freedom fighters of India is a tragic tale in the history of Imperialism.

How far it inspired the later Punjabi rebel's violences and later their part in the non-violent struggle for freedom, one cannot estimate. But the memory of the British annexation of the Punjab after outrageously occupying it by fraud and force, has remained intact in the memories of the progeny of the soldiers, who fought



in the Sikh wars against the British. My own maternal grandfather, who had fought as a soldier in the battle of Chellianwala, told me, in my childhood, the story of the cruel deception by the *Angrezi Sarkar* of the son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and I recall it was those tales which were enough to make me into a rebel, even against the will of my father, who had joined the British Indian army.

The biography entitled *Queen Victoria's Maharaja*, written by my daughter Sushila Anand (and Michael Alexander) was not inspired by me, but was written from her own realisation, during her visit to a Sikh family in Shimla, of the poignant tale of British official treachery and Queen Victoria's indulgence for Maharaja Duleep Singh and as one of the first heroes of the Independence struggle of our country.



## 2

## THE TRAGIC TALE OF MAHARAJA DULEEP SINGH

*K.S. Duggal*

It is said that when he arrived in England, Queen Victoria took instant fancy to Maharaja Duleep Singh for his striking looks and treated him as one of the royal children. So did the Prince Consort. Inviting the young Maharaja to tea one evening, the Queen showed him the *Koh-i-noor* which the British had confiscated at the time of the annexation of his kingdom and suggested that the Maharaja might present it to the Queen with his own hands. This the unsophisticated youth did, beholden as he was to the Queen for a host of petty mercies.

This single incident speaks volumes for guilty conscience of the British regime for the unjust and high-handed way, they had occupied the Punjab. In the words of John M. Ludlow:

“Duleep Singh was an infant; his minority was only to end in 1854. We were his declared protectors. On our last advance into his country we had proclaimed (18th Nov., 1848) that we came to punish insurgents, and to put down all ‘armed opposition to constituted authority’. We fulfilled that pledge by annexing his whole country within six months... In other words, we ‘protected’ our ward by taking the whole country from him.”

The Governor General of India, Lord Dalhousie is believed to have lost no time in confiscating the *Tosha Khana* belonging



to the eleven-year old deposed Maharaja as if he had conquered after giving a fight for which he had to be punished. According to Sir John Login, apart from innumerable precious articles, he took possession of the following historical relics:

- (a) The *Kalghi* or plume of Guru Gobind Singh.
- (b) The *Koh-i-noor* diamond.
- (c) Maharaja Ranjit Singh's golden chair.
- (d) Shah Shuja's gorgeously embroidered pavilion.

As if that was not enough, the Maharaja was removed to Fatehgarh in the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh) And before long it was ensured that the Punjabi association and servants accompanying him returned to the Punjab and replaced by incumbents acceptable to his so called guardians. Accordingly, Mian Keema, who was a childhood companion of the Maharaja was relieved and his place was taken over by one Bhajan Lal, a young Brahmin of Farrukhabad who had studied at an American Mission School. He was instrumental in fostering Maharaja's interest in the Bible which he read out to him regularly. Separated from his mother, distanced from Punjab, interested in learning English, the young Maharaja started emulating the ways of his English guardians, Dr. and Mrs. John Login who were devoted Christians. To the delight of Lord Dalhousie, then came a day in 1850 when the Royal Ward whose minority was yet to terminate in 1854, is said to have decided to relinquish his faith and embrace not only Christianity but also opt for England for permanent residence. Lord Dalhousie was overjoyed. Writing to his friend, Lord Couper, he said:

"I have never from the hour in which I signed the decree had one moment's hesitation or doubt as to the justice or necessity of my act in dethroning the boy. If I had such a doubt, the sight of the blessed results for him, to which that act has led, would now have thoroughly consoled me for what I did then. As it is, my mind is doubly content



as to what he lost; immeasurably content as to the gain he has found in his loss."

As it happened the Maharaja had been engaged to be married to Sardar Chattar Singh Attariwala's daughter. This was not acceptable to Lord Dalhousie. He would not have the Maharaja to do anything with the Sikhs and Punjab after he had been converted. He wrote to Dr. Login in no uncertain terms, 'I should object decidedly, and do not wish to continue any relation hereforth between the Maharaja and the Sikhs, either by alliance with a Sikh family or sympathy with Sikh feelings.' The Governor General would instead have the Maharaja marry Princess Gouramma, daughter of the deposed Raja of Coorg.

However, since the Maharaja was too young to make up his mind, the proposal was dropped and he sailed for England on 19 April, 1854 with one Nehemiah Goreh, a Christian missionary who was to be his tutor in oriental languages for 3 years. A day before his departure Lord Dalhousie presented the Maharaja with a copy of Bible.

Arriving in England, the Maharaja was received with courtesy and kindness, more particularly by Queen Victoria who wrote to Lord Dalhousie on 2 October, 1854.

"This young Prince has the strongest claims upon our generosity and sympathy; deposed for no fault of his, when a little boy of ten years old, he is as innocent as any private individual of the misdeeds which compelled us to depose him, and take possession of his territories. Besides, he has since become a Christian, whereby he is ever cut off from his own people, his case therefore, appears to the Queen still stronger than the former one, as he was not even a conquered enemy. but merely powerless in the hands of Sikh soldiery."

Despite all this: Maharaja Duleep Singh's minority was to be terminated in September, 1854, as he became 16 years old, Lord Dalhousie acting most arbitrarily, extended it by 2 years



more. This was the first major shock for the young Maharaja which seems to have opened his eyes. He was aroused from his dream of make belief and started bothering about his privileges and his prospects in the country of his adoption.

No heed was paid to his repeated appeals and protests. He continued to suffer indignities one after another. And then on 9 December, 1856 when he had crossed even the extended period of minority, he wrote to the Court Directors of East India Company asking them to define his status and how they visualised his future settlement consistent with his 'former rank', his present recognized position, and the expenses necessary for its proper and dignified maintenance.

No action was taken again. To make it worse, during the Mutiny next year in 1857, the Maharaja's house in Fatehgarh was destroyed, his *Tosha Khana* was looted by the mutineers and his English staff including his former tutor, Walter Guise, his Steward Sergeant Eliot, his wife and children were brutally massacred.

As if to console him, soon thereafter the Maharaja was granted permission by the East India Company to assume management of his own affairs, the balances at the banks and other securities etc. having been transferred to his personal credit.

Now that he was on his own and enjoyed freedom of a sort, the Maharaja decided to visit India. He wished to see his mother whom he had not met the last over 13 years. While Queen Victoria had no objections, the Governor General did not consider it advisable the Maharaja going to the Punjab or contacting the Sikh people. Accordingly he was held up at Calcutta where his steamer touched. Thus, Maharani Jind Kaur had to come to Calcutta to be with her son.

In the meanwhile, Chinese War having ended, the Sikh regiments were returning home. Landing at Calcutta as they learnt about Maharaja Duleep Singh, the Sikhs started storming his



hotel for 'darshan'. Noticing this, the administration became panicky; it was decided to hasten the Maharaja's return to England by the first available ship.

Since the mother did not wish to part company with the son, Maharani Jind Kaur was allowed to accompany the son. 'With health broken and eyesight dimmed, her once famed beauty vanished and an air lassitude' the Maharani came only to die in London soon after her arrival in England.

Since the Maharani had desired to be cremated on the Indian soil, Maharaja Duleep Singh brought her dead body to Bombay where it was cremated and the ashes consigned to the river Godavari, hallowed by Guru Gobind Singh.

While returning to London, the Maharaja married Bamba Muller, daughter of a German merchant at Alexanderia in Cairo. He had met her on his way to India in Cairo during his visit to the Presbyterian Mission School.

Maharani Bamba gave the Maharaja 3 sons 3 daughters in about 15 years of their married life. With the large family that he had, the Maharaja became anxious to provide for it adequately, while as per the prevailing arrangements even the Elveden Hall Estate that he occupied was to be disposed of after his death.

In response to Queen Victoria's proclamation of 1858 promising to compensate for the losses incurred by people during the Mutiny, the Maharaja preferred a claim 25,000 pounds for his property looted and destroyed in Fatehgarh. Against this he was sanctioned a miserly sum of 3,000 pounds only which the Maharaja declined to accept.

Before she died, the Maharaja's mother had told him about large private estates that he had inherited in the Punjab and which should lie in his name. The Annexation Treaty had nothing to do with his personal property. The Government refused to entertain this claim also. In fact the Governor General did not want Maharaja Duleep Singh to have anything to do with the Punjab.



In 1885 there were forebodings of Britain's imminent war with Russia. With a view to provide his bonafides, the Maharaja offered to join the British army as a volunteer. In his letter to the Earl of Kimberley in the India office, he wrote:

"My father was an ally of the British Crown and I myself also have had the honour of being styled as such...I am determined to prove my loyalty to my sovereign by placing myself at her service...I shall leave my family hostages in your Lordship's hands."

The Government did not accept this offer too.

The Maharaja came to know of it and was furious. He decided to return to India and re-enter his faith either at *Darbar Sahib* in Amritsar or at *Hazoor Sahib* in Nanded. Accordingly, he sent Rs. 1,000 by way of his offering for prayers and *Prasad* at the *Darbar Sahib*.

The main purpose of the Maharaja's return to India was to embrace Sikhism, provide for his family and arrange for the marriage of his grown up children. However, the India office was not prepared to take any risk. On his way to India when Maharaja arrived at Aden, he was held up and interned in the town. Since it was going to be a long drawn-out wrangle, the Maharaja decided to send Maharani Bamba with children to London.

It was at Aden that the Maharaja was visited by Sardar Thakur Singh. Availing of his presence the Maharaja assembled 4 other Sikhs among them Roor Singh Kohli; Lopoki (Amritsar) and Jawand Singh of Barki (Lahore), and organised the *Pahul* ceremony with *Panj Pyare* (The Five Elect). He thus re-entered the Sikh faith.

Learning this, the India Office loosened its grip and permitted the Maharaja to go to Europe. It was a desperate Maharaja Duleep Singh who wrote this letter to Times of India which also appeared in the Tribune dated 3 July, 1886.

Although the India Government succeeded in preventing

me from reaching Bombay lately, yet they are not able to close all the roads that are to India, for, when I return, I can either land at Goa or pondicherry, or if fancy an overland route, then I can enter the Punjab through Russia...'

Having sipped *Amrit* and embraced Sikhism, the Maharaja felt as if spirit of the Khalsa had revived in him once again. He disregarded the terms of 1849 Treaty and believed that as per the Treaty of 1846, he continued to be the King of the Punjab and the accredited leader of the Sikh people. And he was not far wrong in maintaining that.

It so happened that at this time his eldest son Prince Victor Duleep Singh wrote to his father suggesting that he should ask the India office for money that was due to him. The Maharaja read the letter and wrote back:

"Look upon me as dead. But I will never sever from my purpose... I could see you starve and even would take your life to put an end to your misery, but will never return to England."

He then went to Paris and is said to have issued 3 proclamations under signatures as (a) Maharaja of the Sikhs (b) Lawful Sovereign of the Sikh nation and (c) Sovereign of the Sikh Nation.

It was the newly born patriot in Maharaja Duleep Singh who articulated these sentiments in his third proclamation issued in February, 1887:

"By the help of Almighty, *Aryavarata*, shall once more be free. Rise up and make common cause with us and share with us also the glory of liberating our motherland."

Not only this, he contacted the Russian Revolutionary Party and travelled to Moscow incognito under the name of Patrick Casey. According to the then Paris correspondent of the Daily Chronicle, as also stated in the Tribune dated 8 June, 1887, the



Maharaja was to seek 'permission of the Russian authorities to be allowed to proceed through Central Asia to Afghan frontier.' He wrote to the Czar on 10 May, 1887 'to lay before the Imperial government the humble prayer of the Princes and people of India for deliverance from the oppression from under the yoke of the British rule. He was convinced that he would succeed to make the entire Punjab revolt and cause inhabitants to attack in the rear of the British forces sent to oppose the Imperial (Russian) army ...' However, his endeavour on this front, too, did not bear fruit.

Returning from Russia disillusioned Maharaja Duleep Singh decided to settle down in Paris in France. He designated Sardar Thakur Singh as his Prime Minister in India. However, Sardar Thakur Singh was not destined to live long. He died in Pondicherry on 18 August, 1887. It was a great shock for the Maharaja. Followed by the death of Maharani Bamba a month later on 18 September, the Maharaja was a completely broken man.

The British, however, did not give up pursuing the Maharaja with a view to taming him. They planted an English girl, Ada Douglass Wetherill who accompanied him from France to Russia. Two years after the death of Maharani Bamba, the Maharaja married his English companion.

And then the inevitable took place. Hardly a year in Paris and he had a severe attack of paralysis from which he never recovered and he died a lonely and forlorn man on 22 October, 1893 carrying with him his dream of leading his people and freeing the motherland from the yoke of the British rule.



## 3

## MAHARAJA DULEEP SINGH IN RUSSIA

*Raj Kumar Sharma*

By the Treaty of 1849 under which the Punjab was annexed to the British Indian Empire, Maharaja Duleep Singh was given a pension of "not less than four and not exceeding five lakhs of rupees per annum" and his freedom of movement was limited to such places as the Government of India might select. The young Maharaja along with *Shahzada* Sheo Deo Singh, his mother Rani Dukhno (wife of Maharaja Sher Singh) were removed to Fatehgarh on the Ganges. There, Dr. Login of the Bengal Army afterward Sir John Login, and Lady Login sweetly and quietly moulded him in their own fashion. They did not wait for his maturity and he was baptised as a Christian in 1853. About this; Lord Dalhousie had once written to Lord Couper: "Politically we could desire nothing better, for it destroys his possible influence forever."

After this, the Maharaja was represented as very eager to go to England. In England he was made comfortable in order to charm away his sense of nostalgia. He was treated kindly by Queen Victoria and Prince consort in the Buckingham Palace. There he became very popular among the royal families as he was a very good shot and his affable manners aroused considerable interest. Even then he was not allowed to join any college/university lest he became conscious of his glorious heritage.

In 1856 for the first time after his stay in England. Maharaja expressed his desire to return to India and asked for the removal



of restrictions upon his residence but the outbreak of mutiny in 1857 prevented his visit to India.

In 1861 Maharaja decided to visit India to see his mother and enter into parleys with the British Indian Government for her future residence. He was told not to visit Punjab. It so happened that while he was at Calcutta, several Sikh regiments who had arrived from China surrounded his hotel and were very demonstrative. Lord Canning told Duleep Singh to return to England. At once, the mother and the son were made to sail for England.

Maharani Jindan was then not what she had been. Her heart and health were broken, her eye-sight almost lost. They were together in England for a while. 'Excited and unsettled state of Maharaja's religion' was attributed to Maharani Jindan's presence. And so she was separated from her son and the mother and son had to live apart. Rani Jindan died in England in 1864. With great reluctance, India Office allowed the Maharaja to visit India to perform the last obsequies of his mother. His movements during the visit were practically confined to the Bombay Presidency.

After his marriage in 1861, Duleep Singh had some peaceful years but his financial difficulties persisted, for his pension remained unsettled, he had not the means to live according to his rank as the British Government had not fulfilled the terms of the Treaty. He put forth his claims before the India Office time and again. His main demands were: A court of inquiry to look into the lapse of Five Lakh Fund, his landed estates in the Punjab, and better provision for his family. Much correspondence ensued between Duleep Singh and the Secretary of State and the Government of India but his case was never settled. His representations bore no fruit. Duleep Singh was disgusted. It must be mentioned here that in the meanwhile Sardar Thakur Singh Sandhanwalia<sup>2</sup> had met him in England in 1884 and urged upon the Maharaja to come back to the land of his birth. By then he



had realized how he had been shabbily treated and unjustly deprived of his kingdom for no fault of his. He resolved to proceed to India and "be done with England and her hypocracies," as he bitterly put it.

Maharaja Duleep Singh left for India on 31st March, 1886 accompanied by his wife and children. It was feared that the party might be detained at Gibraltar, the British naval base in the Mediterranean, but nothing happened. Even before he started for India, the Maharaja had been told that while in India he would have to regulate his movements according to the wishes of the Viceroy.

But the Imperialists wished otherwise. Under no circumstances they would like the son of the Lion of the Punjab to be present in India — and particularly in the Punjab the land he once ruled. They knew well the reaction of his arrival in Punjab and they themselves admitted that Duleep Singh's return or threatened return would put a considerable strain on the loyalty of Sikh soldiers. How the authorities in India were perturbed over his impending visit can be well imagined from a letter Sir Frederick Roberts, the British Commander-in-Chief wrote to the Duke of Cambridge, dated 29th May" 1886, after Maharaja had reached Aden. He wrote "it is a great pity that he has been allowed to come east of Suez..."

On the other hand the Sikhs, particularly the *Kukas*, were greatly excited and were hopeful of the restoration of the *Khalsa Raj*. Hand-bills and books were distributed and the return of the Maharaja was given wide publicity. All this was the work of S. Thakur Singh Sandhanwalia. Such was the enthusiasm among the Punjabis that a village in the Lahore district even refused to pay its land revenues saying that the revenue was due only to their King (Duleep Singh) who was shortly to arrive in India.<sup>3</sup>

Immediately after the Maharaja left for India, consultations started about the place of his internment. Burma was suggested by H.M. Durand. But the proposal was turned down on the plea



“it would be almost impossible to prevent inter-communication between the more and unsettled Sikhs of the province and the Maharaja as it had happened in the case of *Kuka* leader Bhai Ram Singh.”<sup>4</sup>

When the ship reached Aden the Maharaja was detained by British Resident, Brigadier Hoggs, under orders from the Indian Government on the pretext that he had issued an address to the Sikhs announcing his intention of assuming authority over the Sikh nation. From Aden the Maharaja sent his family back to England. Here he re-embraced Sikhism on 25th May, 1886, at the hands of Five Sikhs.

On 1st June, 1886, the Maharaja sent a telegram to the viceroy renouncing the stipend paid to him under the Treaty of annexation “thus laying aside that iniquitous document” and sailed for Marseilles by a French mail steamer. On his way to Europe he wrote a letter to the *Times of India*: “ I am now travelling on my way back to Europe to drink the German waters. Although the Indian government succeeded perverting me from reaching Bombay lately, yet they are not able to close all the roads that there are to India: for when I return I can either land at Goa or Pondicherry, or if I fancy I can enter Punjab through Russia.”<sup>5</sup> From Aden he reached Paris. That he had a mind to go to Russia even before his abortive voyage to India, is evident from a conversation which the British Ambassador had with M. De. Giers the Russian Foreign Minister.<sup>6</sup>

In Paris the Maharaja lived in strictest incognito of course making contacts with those who would be of some help in his struggle against England. His supporters in Europe at that time were: a French man in whose hotel he stayed at Baulvard; an ex-major, an Irish man; a retired major in London who was formerly in Duleep Singh's service, and a Bengali Muhammadan studying Law in London — a close associate of the Fenians .... who was very helpful to Duleep Singh and promised to further his cause on



his return to India. In Paris, the Maharaja formed a sort of alliance with the Irish revolutionaries who willingly accepted his professed aid. The Irish revolutionaries aimed at weakening England all over the world and thought that Duleep Singh could be of use to them by embarrassing England in Afghanistan and India.

It was Patrick Casey, an Irish national, who prepared the way for the Maharaja's visit to Russia. He visited Katkoff and many other personages; it was the preparatory work done by Patrick Casey that Maharaja was able to enter Russia and it was he who introduced him to the Russian Military Party led by Katoff, General Bagdanovitch and Ignatiev, who promised all help against England.

He contemplated leaving Paris On the 17th March, 1887, for Marseilles, from where he was to sail to Odessia via Constantinople, but gave into the objections of his friends who dissuaded him against this step, predicting his "possible assassination through the British intriguers." An alternative idea was to go by rail to St. Petersburg where he was to be received by Katkoff, Bagdanovitch and Ignatiev. The latter plan was eventually decided upon, and he left Paris on 21th March for St. Petersburg.

The Maharaja started from Paris for Russia travelling under the name of Patrick Casey whose passport he used. At the station of Berlin, he was robbed of his travelling handbag containing his passport and 30,000 Frs. as well. The Maharaja applied to the German Police with the hope of regaining possession of his property and gave his name as Patrick Casey. His application to the German Police remaining without result, he wrote to his friends at Moscow, and by their influence soon received the assurance that he could come to Russia without a passport. It was General Bagdanovitch who was mainly instrumental in this. The other man who travelled along with Duleep Singh was Arur Singh Kohli, who later on came to India. He was a British subject and had succeeded in getting a passport at the British Embassy in Paris.



Now the question arises why Duleep Singh pinned his hope on Russia. It is well known that Russia was the main rival of England in Asia at that time. Their interests clashed with each other over Persia (modern Iran), Afghanistan and Tibet. Russian armies by then had occupied Merv, from where Herat, the gateway to India was only 150 miles. This rapid Russian advance in Central Asia had much alarmed the British authorities in India as it posed a serious threat to their empire. Moreover, there was talk of Russian advance towards Herat. Thus, the British Government had developed what is known in history as 'Russo-Phobia'. Besides, the Russian Military Party which considered England as their main enemy promised to secure every possible help for Duleep Singh from the Czar (Alexander III).

### Maharaja's Mission in Russia

To quote the Paris correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*. "The Maharaja had gone to Russia for the purpose of organising a conference of all the enemies of England. This will consist in an endeavour to rally all disaffected Indians and Canadians with a sprinkling of Irish revolutionaries. An effort will then be made to stir up an insurrection on the Afghan frontier so as to bring the active interference of Russia." The name of Alfred Aylward (who was connected with the Boers) is again pronounced as one of the leaders of this movement.

Another Paris correspondent of the *Standard* writes: "Whether Duleep Singh would be successful in his designs or he will fail, may be a question but I have the very best authority for saying that he went to Russia with the object of seeking permission of the Russian authorities to be allowed to proceed to Central Asia to Afghan frontiers. He believes he will have sufficient influence to raise in the Amir Dominions most serious trouble for the English, who he contends have deprived him of a very large portion of his legal inheritance."<sup>8</sup>

Maharaja's every future step depended upon Anglo-Russian relations as Arur Singh later informed Mr. Weber (Vice-Consul, Moscow) that their stay in Moscow would depend on the state of affairs in Asia and the probabilities of Russian advance towards Herat.

Duleep Singh was received in Moscow. Commenting on his entry into Russia, the *Moscow Gazette* of 5-17th Sept. 1887 wrote: "The Maharaja has decided to break off all relations with England and to settle in Russia. We welcome him with the conviction that he will find among us all the sympathy which his fate demands."

The presence of the Maharaja in Moscow was quite an event. His Indian dress, particularly the turban and jewels, caused a lot of interest. A gentleman from *Moscow Gazette* Office was daily in attendance upon him and whenever he went out, he was always to visit or dine with Katkoff.

When the Maharaja's presence in Moscow became known to the British authorities in London, they contacted M.De Giers (Russian Foreign Minister), through their ambassador at St. Petersburg who impressed upon him the necessity of not allowing Duleep Singh to remain in Russia and his possible advance towards Central Asia. But M.De Giers who was considered to be a friend of England seems to have encountered much opposition from the Ministry of Interior which was very particular about the absence of reciprocity between the two countries and they had a big grievance against England that she had given shelter to Nihilist refugees such as Hartman. When asked about the guarantee of Duleep Singh's innocuousness, M.De Giers was non-committal. He replied, "With the experience we had, can't tell what might chance to happen?"

One 10th May, 1887, Duleep Singh addressed an historic letter to the Czar of Russia, making an impassioned plea for Russian's help in the deliverance of his country from the British yoke. He wrote: "I guarantee an easy conquest of India, For



besides the promised assistance princes of India with their armies, it is in my power to raise the entire Punjab in revolt and cause the inhabitants to attack to their rear the British forces sent to oppose Imperial Army." .... In the end he proposed: "should the Imperial government, however, think proper to turn its attention towards the conquest of India and desire my services for that purpose, I would suggest that 2 to 3 gentlemen speaking English well should be appointed both to further discuss the matter with me and enquire into the truth of the assertions I have made with regard to India...."

During his stay in Russia, Maharaja Duleep Singh was said to have developed friendship with Alikhanoff (?) the Governor of Punjab, Sikander Khan, Governor of Herat and the Governor of Tiflis with whom he wanted to stay after the death of Katkoff. He also met Prince Dologoruky, the Governor-General of Moscow, although the British ambassador did his best to prevent this meeting.

Russians offered to give Duleep Singh an allowance for his maintenance but the latter was too proud to accept it and declared that his Indian friends would supply all his wants. He was fully hopeful of getting aid from them through S. Thakur Singh who had crossed over to Pondicherry along with his sons on 6th November, 1886. He was granted political asylum by the French Governor, M. Manes. From Pondicherry, Thakur Singh carried regular correspondence with Duleep Singh via Paris. In one of the letters Duleep Singh wrote to him to ask the native princes to help him with money with which he might be able to raise an army on the frontier and enter India via Kabul.<sup>10</sup> In another letter he says: "Send an agent to Nepal and ask them to become neutral as Russia is afraid that in the case of a war, Nepal will help England with troops."

Thakur Singh with the following of about 30 persons did his best to win over many native states like Nabha, Patiala,



Faridkot, Hyderabad and Kashmir to Duleep Singh's side and was very hopeful that one day he would be able to turn the British out of India with the help of these princely States. But his efforts did not meet with any success. One by one most of his men were captured by the Indian Police. The British authorities were so particular about the whole affair that a complete veil of secrecy was thrown around their proceedings against Sandhanwalia's Party. Not a single person was put on trial and all were detained under Bengal Regulation III of 1818.

While in Russia, Maharaja Duleep Singh maintained a link with the Irish revolutionaries in Paris as is evident from a letter captured from Arur Singh in India. The letter addressed to Duleep Singh reads :

"The two military parties of the Irish nationalities have drawn up a proposal for the establishment of an Irish military colony near the Indian frontier—6000 to 6100 men engaging to attract to it 11,000 to it 13,000 deserters from the British Army. The company probably to be commanded by one of our most devoted friends, who will act as the Imperial Government of Russia may dictate, and it is suggested that, if necessary and expedient, it will be ready to march in the service of any deposed sovereign and place him on the throne.

I am awaiting for M.De C to send document (this C was an Irish who had been Major in the British army, as informed by Arur Singh to British detectives in India) but you might refer the matter to Katkoff. For no time is to be lost, pray write me a line on the subject."<sup>11</sup>

Besides, the Irish revolutionaries and the Russian Military party, the other men who took up the cause of Duleep Singh were Abdul Rasul, Mustafa Effendi and Jamal-ud-din.

Abdul Rasul, the right hand man of Duleep Singh in Russia, was a Kashmiri shawl merchant who lived in Cairo before 1884. In that year he joined the Nile Expeditionary Force as an



interpreter. He was found intriguing with the Mehdi and tried on the charge of high treason. For want of legal proof, he was acquitted and turned out of British service. Later he became an active partisan of the Fenians at Paris and was summoned to Moscow by the Russian Military party through Duleep Singh. It was he who later on went on a mission to Egypt to establish a link with the Sudanese rebels there and seek help from Turkish nobles at Constantinople.

Jamal-ud-din, known as Afghan Sheikh in Russia, was a native of Saidabad Hamdan in Persia. He left his motherland about the year 1886 and came over to Russia and joined Duleep Singh and Katkoff.

Mastafa Effendi who was introduced to Duleep Singh by Jamal-ud-din, was the incharge of burial ground of the Sultans of Constantinople and according to Arur Singh was in the Russian pay. Any native of India wishing to join Duleep Singh would be helped by him.<sup>12</sup>

These men formed in Russia what they named as Indian Liberation Society and issued an appeal to the Indians on 29th September 1887, which reads<sup>13</sup>:

“Brother,

The important and long-expected crisis is drawing near at hand. The hour is approaching when you will be called upon by your excited chiefs to wipe out the wrongs and injuries inflicted on you by the myrmidons of England; and to that call we are sure you will heartily respond, if yours be the true spirit of true men and the devotion of heroes... Natives of British India, awake from your slumber and prove to the whole world that you shall no longer be the dupes of English merchants and the slaves of the English Governor. Remember the outrages and insults heaped on your heads as well as on those of your forefathers, by Englishman from the first moment when he set his foot on Hindi soil down to the present day... Remember all these wrongs when the day of reckoning arrives.”



When everything was going smoothly, there came the sudden death of Katkoff the great Russian who had taken up the cause of Duleep Singh and who exercised a considerable influence over the Czar. Had Katkoff lived, Duleep Singh's fate would have been different. It was through his personal influence that Czar ordered to give him (Duleep Singh) a personal guard and liberty to live wherever he liked and arrangements were made to send a Russian Officer in disguise with Abdul Rasul to India to test Duleep Singh's influence among his countrymen. (In one of his letters to Thakur Singh Sandhanwalia, Duleep Singh also mentions the name of one Russian journalist named Notovitch who had a good command over Persian language.)

Katkoff before his death introduced Duleep Singh to General Kuhlberg of the Boundary Commission and introduced him to the Maharaja. Katkoff's son-in-law, a member of the Imperial Council and his two friends who were ministers of state, promised to further Duleep Singh's cause but his future plans suffered a good deal with the death of this great friend.

After Katkoffs death the Russian Military party was headed by General Ignatiev, Count Tolstoy and Labetzeff. They asked Duleep Singh to create trouble in Kashmir so that they could force the Czar to go against M.De Giers and give him assistance to attack the English. The other plan was that the Maharaja should go in disguise to Amritsar and there suddenly throw off his disguise and proclaim himself the sovereign of the Sikhs but his wife (second wife) is said to have bitterly opposed this plan and Duleep Singh had to abandon such an idea for ever.

It was with a view to make a common cause with the Indian Princes and get their pecuniary aid that Arur Singh was sent to India in 1887. Arur Singh carried a letter to the Nawab of Oudh and a circular letter to all the native princes of India. Arur Singh fell into the trap laid down by British detectives in Bengal and was arrested at Calcutta. His Mission to India in his own words



was: 'to go to all the Native Princes of India and prepare the ground for Duleep Singh and Russia, obtaining if possible; from each one of them, written assurances of support which could be shown in Russia. He was to appoint an agent in each state to be the medium of correspondence and was to make arrangement, for taking around a Russian Officer (who was to arrive, he said, in India in a month's time) for the purpose of verifying the information given to Russian authorities by Duleep Singh as to the favourable disposition of the princes and chiefs in India. He was also to obtain money for bringing high Russian Officials to exert their influence on Duleep Singh's behalf. Arur Singh was to also visit certain influential Sikhs and the *Pujaris* of Amritsar temple in order to communicate Duleep Singh's instructions for cutting railway lines and attacking the British army in the rear when a Russian force should appear on the frontier."<sup>14</sup>

An attempt was also made to stir up trouble in Sudan at the instance of Abdul Rasul who was well known to the Sudanese leader Zobeir Pasha with whom he had been in regular correspondence during the latter's confinement at Gibraltar. Russians thought that the Sudanese could be of great help to them by distracting British attention from India and could block the Suez Canal in the event of a rising in India. Abdul Rasul was given a letter of introduction to Ivanoff, the Russian Council at Cairo, through whom he was to communicate with the Sudanese. Abdul Rasul also carried Duleep Singh's letters to Zobeir Pasha, Ahmad Mukhtar Pasha and some other nobles at Constantinople which he delivered through Mustafa Effendi. He left Moscow in December, 1887 and travelling via Berlin, Paris and London reached Cairo. Here he and Zobeir Pasha made plans that could make the Sudanese rise Up.<sup>15</sup> Zobeir Pasha would have helped Duleep Singh with money, were it not that the English had confiscated his wealth of 3 crores of rupees. The British Consulate at Cairo, which was vigorously following Abdul Rasul's activities in Egypt, succeeded in gaining



an access to the secrets of Zobair Pasha and Abdul Rasul through one of their agents specially sent from India who posed as a sympathiser of Duleep Singh. The Agent succeeded in luring Abdul Rasul into a trap and he was arrested on the sea even before his ship touched the Bombay harbour. He was the last emissary of Duleep Singh who came to India.

Meanwhile Sardar Thakur Singh Sandhanwalia had died at Pondicherry in November, 1887 and his death virtually crippled the movement launched in Duleep Singh's favour in India, though his sons did for some time continue the work of their father but the lack of funds forced them to seek the pardon of the British Government for their past activities.

In his struggle against the British, Duleep Singh was all alone having received no aid from the 'brother princes' as he called them. Nor there was any response from Kashmir on which he pinned high hopes. He is only said to have received a letter from Holkar to the effect that he fully sympathised with his cause.<sup>16</sup>

In Russia Duleep Singh's mission suffered a great setback with death of Katkoff. Although the Russian Military Party promised to do everything that they could for him but they were no match for their adversary M. De Giers who was then at the helm of affairs. He would not consent to the proposal of helping Duleep Singh against England and said that Czar had aided the King of Bulgaria and the Amir of Afghanistan but the English had turned both of them; against the Czar and no good result had been obtained. M. De Giers also said that his spies had travelled all over India (although he had sent none) who had ascertained beyond doubt that no one wanted Duleep Singh there and Duleep Singh could be of no use even if there is an invasion of India.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the much talked of war between England and Russia (upon which Duleep Singh had pinned considerable hopes) never came about.

Even Maharaja's request to proceed to Central Asia was turned down and he was not allowed to go east of Kieff.



At last finding his stay in Russia of no avail, Duleep Singh decided to leave that country for ever and arrived in Paris on 3rd November, 1888 with a broken heart. He died on 22nd October 1893 due to apoplexy. When the last moment came, he was alone, far from his friends and beloved country, in a hotel in Paris.

## FOOTNOTES

1. *Private Letters of Marquis of Dalhousie*, pp. 156-97, from Dalhousie to Couper, 3rd March, 1851.
2. S. Thakur Singh Sandhanwalia was the son of S. Lehna Singh, a reputed courtier of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's time.
3. Home (Pol.) Dec., 1991. C. I. D. Secret Memorandum on Recent Developments in Sikh Politics, 1911.
4. Foreign Secret Procdgs. - June, 1887, Nos. 165-166; from W.M. Young to H. M. Durand, 21st May, 1886.
5. *The Tribune*, July 3, 1886.
6. Foreign Secret Procdgs. September 1887, No. 61; from R. B. D. Morrier to Marquis of Salisbury, 24th February, 1887.
7. *The Tribune*, June 8, 1887.
8. Ibid.
9. Foreign Secret proceedings, Jan. 1888, no. 9, from R.B.D. Morrier to Marquis of Salisbury.
10. From the London Collection of Viscount Cross - microfilm in the Punjab state Archives, Patiala, Enclosure iv to Viceroy letter 10-10-1887.
11. Foreign Secret Procdgs.-Oct. 1887. No. 4; Enclosure to letter from J. Ware to H. M. Durand. 7-8-1887.
12. Foreign Secret Procdgs.-Oct 1887. No. 35; H.M. Durand to Sir E. Bradford, 9-11-1887.
13. *The Tribune*, 9-11-1887.
14. Foreign Secret Procdgs.-Oct 1887. No. 35; H/M. Durand to Sir Bradford, 9-9-1887.
15. Foreign Secret Procdgs. -June 1888. No. 16; from H.M. Baring, 28th March, 1888.
16. Foreign Secret Procdgs.- May 1888. No. 1-4; from, Aziz-ud-din to Foreign Secretary. 2-4-1888.
17. Foreign Secret Procdgs.-Aug. 1888, nos. 13-14.

## 4

## SOME DOCUMENTS FROM THE RUSSIAN ARCHIVES

*The news of Maharaja Duleep Singh's visit to Russia reverberated in the length and breadth of the British empire. His twenty month's stay on the Russian soil kept the British diplomats and the intelligence personnel on tenterhooks. Initially the Russians were sceptical about Duleep Singh's averments. That ultimately they took him seriously, speaks in abundance about the diplomatic skill of the Maharaja. It is another matter that the plans of Duleep Singh did not fructify. That was due to the internal difficulties of Russia and hegemony of Britain on the international scenario. The proceedings of Duleep Singh's activities in Paris and St. Petersburg find mention in the records preserved in both the French and the Russian Archives. The following is the full text of some of the documents found in the Russian Archives at Moscow. These documents were earlier alluded to in an article by K. S. Thapar published in the Journal of Sikh Studies Vol. I, Number 1, Feb. 1977 (G.N.D.U. Amritsar).*

- Editor

### DOCUMENT I

Translation of a letter (original in French)

From:

His Excellency Monsieur de Kotezbue etc.  
(Russian Ambassador in Paris)

To

Maharaja Duleep Singh

Dated: Paris 16/28 July, 1886.

Highness

The Imperial Government protects peace. It wants it and



maintains it in its own vast possessions; it desires it in those of the other powers and feels that the Governments are jointly responsible in their effort of guaranteeing among the peoples the benefactions of security and stability of institutions. Far from it, hence, thought of favouring or provoking troubles in India. No reason impels it and Your Highness would find the means necessary to realise plans of insurrection or of vengeance. I am authorised to affirm it to you in consequence of what you were good enough to say to me in the course of our interviews.

Kindly accept etc.

Kotezbue

## DOCUMENT II

Translation of a letter (original in French)

From:

His Excellency Monsieur de Kotezdue  
(Russian Ambassador in Paris)

To

His Excellency Monsieur de Giers

Dated: Paris 30 July / 10 August 1886.

Monsieur le Ministre,

By the communication that your Excellency was good enough to address me dated the 8th of July... I was commissioned to make Maharaja Duleep Singh understand that no reason impels the Imperial Government to provoke troubles in India and that it is not in Russia that he could find the necessary means for realising his plans.

Not wishing to go to his house considering that Duleep Singh is probably watched by English agents, and thinking, besides, that a verbal communication is subject to interpretation more than a letter, I have expressed to him by writing on the 16/28 July the views of our cabinet.

I have the honour to transmit herewith, to Your Excellency,

the text of the letter that I have sent to him. That is the only written piece from the Imperial Embassy that may be in his hands. The Maharaja has not replied to me and has not come to see me again.

I have the honour to be with profound respect.

Monsieur le Ministre

Your Excellency's very humble and very obedient

servant:

"Kotezbue"

### DOCUMENT III

Translation of a letter (original in French)

From:

His Excellency Monsieur de Kotezbue  
(Russian Ambassador in Paris)

To

His Excellency Monsieur de Giers

Dated: Paris 6 / 18 September, 1886

SECRET

Monsieur le Ministre,

Maharaja Duleep Singh has come again to see me. He tells me that proclamations have been published in the Punjab calling upon the people to revolt in his name and with the assurance that it would be supported by Russia. He affirms that this has come about without his giving the order, even without his knowledge. But he thinks that a rising in the Punjab would perhaps be opportune today in view of the political events which are brewing. He has again offered his services to the Imperial Government, in spite of our reply which had rejected his first overtures. Moreover, he thanks us for having clearly declared that he cannot count on us. If he continues to have hopes, it is because he is convinced that a war between Russia and England is imminent.

I have told him that he should not have illusions, that the reply he had received was final.



"Then so as not to expose my poor people, I shall send the order to my adherents to suspend all action."

"That is what is best for you to do."

He wished to remain in Paris for about two months more and then he will try to go to Pondicherry to settle down there.

While leaving me, he again repeated to me that the war with England is inevitable and that notwithstanding our present refusals, we shall see him serving our cause because of (his) hatred against the power which has despoiled him and because of (his) thirst for vengeance.

He congratulates himself that we shall find in his people a very useful ally, considering that it lives at the borders of the frontiers of Afghanistan and its warlike qualities surpass those of the other Indian peoples.

I have the honour to be with profound respect.

Monsieur le Minister

Your Excellency's etc.

"Kotezbue"

Maharaja Duleep Singh

At the bottom of this letter, there is a note in the handwriting of Emperor Alexander III.

"May be sometime it will be useful."

## DOCUMENT IV

Letters

Duleep Singh

Indian Maharaja

1887

Le Comte Cheremetoff

Kyckobo, Moscow (Russia)

Park of Petrov, Hill Station, Porokhovehekova

My dear Count,

July 6, 1887

As when I last had the pleasure of visiting you at your house in Moscow you were so kind as to say that you would ask a friend

to give me some black-cock shooting therefore I trouble you with this letter in order to inform you that I should not be able to accept his invitation were he to ask me to go to his Estate for sport because neither the Princess nor my Secretary understand a word of Russian and in consequence I could not leave them behind nor could I take them with me as we have a good deal of luggage of some little value of which there be no one to take charge in our absence from here.

**Mr. Katkoff's serious and dangerous illness is causing me great uneasiness. For were he to die I would be left without any one to protect me and might be turned out of Russia through some intrigue at the "High Quarters."**

My box containing books has not yet come from Paris or I would have ventured to send a copy of history for your acceptance but will do so as soon as it arrives.

I remain

Yours Sincerely

Duleep Singh

Sovereign of the Punjab

## DOCUMENT V

Care of Messrs Zenker and Co.

Moscow

August 2nd, 1887

My dear Count Cheremetoff,

My long expected box having at last arrived from Paris, I hasten to fulfil my promise to the Countess and herewith forward a copy of my early political history and that of the Annexation of my Dominions by the English.

When I last saw Count Bobrinsky he told me that you said something in connection with my visiting your Estates in the Caucasus. When you were so kind as to invite me to your country



house the other day, unfortunately I did not understand you at the time, nor do I even now know exactly what it was, but being confident that kindness was meant, I beg you to accept my sincere thanks for the same.

**Katkoff's death is indeed a very severe blow to me and I am now left without a protector alone in a strange land, without knowing the language of the country and the imperial Foreign office I fear against me; but trusting in God, I take courage and am ready to meet all difficulties.**

With your kind permission I will send you some cuttings, from Indian journals as soon as they reach me translated into French from Paris, and from which you will see both what is occurring in India in consequence of my having reached Russia, and what some English officers think of me out there.

I also take this opportunity of thanking you both, you and the Countess, from my heart, for kind hospitality on the occasion of my visit to your country seat and

I remain with my compliments to the Countess.

Yours Sincerely

Duleep Singh.

## DOCUMENT VI

Copy of the office notes (Translation: Original in Russian)

### I

6.7.1887

Duleep refuses to take part in the hunt, reason, [his wife's (?)] lack of knowledge of the language of the Princess and of his Secretary, therefore, they could not be left without him; he can't take them with him, there is no one he can leave the thing with. Anxiety for the illness of Katkoff because in the case of his death, Duleep will be left without a protector and would be

forced to leave Russia because of some intrigue in the upper circles.

## II

2.8.1887

He has told that books from Paris have arrived Chermetoff has been given a copy of his early political history of the Annexation by England of his dominions. He thanks for the invitation to visit the Estates of Cheremetoff.

He is sorry for the death of Katkoff, reason: he is also in a foreign country without knowing the language and without any protection. He is afraid that the official circles in the foreign office might be against him. He is ready to meet with difficulties.

He is ready to send Cheremetoff extracts of Indian Journals (in French translation) from which he could see what happened in India because of Duleep's residence in Russia and the English opinion in this case.

## DOCUMENT VII

Sunday 16 May 1887 Dinner time.

Highest Signatures

"....I am sending to your person for persual. Don't show it to anybody. Answer him but before sending it show it to me."

Text : English letters with Russian translation.

Before I take the liberty of placing before His Majesty's Government the request of the Princes and people of India for their deliverance from their oppressors, I wish to say that I seek no personal advantage for myself. I only desire the freedom of 250,000,000 of my people from the British tyrants and thus also benefit the person who will free them....

One thing alone I wish to have, when the people of India have become free I wish to live in my own country in the Punjab



from where the British have expelled me... But I do not make this a condition.

*\*It is desirable* I desire to give the rest of my life to the interests of Emperor whose real subject I earnestly wish to become.

*It would be desirable to verify this* Through my near reation Sardar.....Singh (Thakur Singh 7) who is well known in Punjab and in India, I was asked by most of the Princes of India, to go to Russia and request the Emperor's Government to take this work in hand. Those Princes altogether have an army of 300,000 and are ready to fight when the Imperial Government have decided to attack British Empire in India. I should like to accompany the army and show it to my people how kind and generous His Majesty has been to us...

I must say that now the yearly income is only 3 million Pounds Sterling but I am sure that when things in India are set right they can easily pay 8 to 9 million Pounds Sterling. The English take from India 50 to 60 million Pounds Sterling.

It will not be out of place here to explain to you why I have such an influence on my people and can do appreciable work for the Imperial Government. I am the king of 22 million people out of which 8 million belong the martial race in other words the whole of Punjab which is inhabited by the most warlike people in India and they are all ready for me...

It is not my business to interfere in the question whether the Imperial Government is to invade India or not. That is the Emperor's own wish to decide whether it is necessary or not. I am only acting as the agent of 250 million of my people for freeing them from British slavery.

---

\* Nothing by the Emperor in his own hand.

*It can be  
done*

In doing so I am only discharging my duty. After this I request the Emperor to allow me to live in his Dominions in freedom and safety and I leave the freedom of my people in the hands of Providence. If the Imperial Government decide to put their mind to India and want my help then I request that 2 or 3 men who know English should be deputed with me and I will assure them that all I have said is true.

(In his own hand he has signed)

Duleep Singh

## DOCUMENT VIII

Copy (Translation of an office note: Original in Russian)  
18th May 1887

Duleep Singh Maharaja wrote in his letter of 10th instant that he is willing to sacrifice his life to the interests of the Emperor, whose true subject he is willing to become. H. M. remarked 'it is desirable'.

Regarding his idea that the Princes of India had plans — the answer of H.M. was that it would be desirable to verify this fact. Duleep Singh asked His Majesty to permit him to reside in liberty and in safety in his dominions and to appoint 2 or 3 persons who know the English language in order to ask him what he knows and he would show that he was right in what he said about India. H.M had said that it could be done.





## 5

## IN PRAISE OF MAHARAJA DULEEP SINGH

*Kanhiya Lal*

The Sikh ruling dynasty of the Punjab continued to be looked upon as symbol of sovereignty and glory even after the British annexation of the Punjab. Maharaja Duleep Singh continued to receive special attention and reverence that was due to a ruling Maharaja. Rai Bahadur Kanheya Lal, a retired Engineer turned poet-historian of late nineteenth century presented a copy of his book written in Persian verse: *Zafar Namah-i-Ranjit Singh* (also called *Ranjit Namah*) to Maharaja Duleep Singh. The presentation note described as *Arzdasht* was specially calligraphed in *nastaliq* (a kind of Persian script) on a separate paper within floral designed margin in azure, green red-gold and turquoise blue with a beautifully executed *Peshani* in Kashmiri style. The space in between the lines of the text was decorated with floral bands in gold work. The text of the note is composed of three parts — the formal note, an encomium on Maharaja Duleep Singh and an introduction to the author. Since the author laments the decline of the kingdom of the Punjab and is laudatory about Ranjit Singh's administration in his *Tarikh-i-Punjab* (original in Urdu), it is relevant to take note of the encomium vis-a-vis the British policies towards Maharaja Duleep Singh. A free English rendering of the first two parts of the note is given below for the benefit of the scholars.

-Editor

“To Maharaja Duleep Singh Sahib Bahadur G.C.S.I. dear son of the late exalted Maharaja Ranjit Singh Sahib Bahadur and embodiment of benevolence and generosity who remains as glorious as the sun. May the Almighty God keep the star of his fortune ever shining !

“Maharaja Duleep Singh graciously occupies the throne of grandeur. Maharaja Duleep Singh is the fountainhead of generosity, magnanimity and compassion. Maharaja Duleep Singh is the son of that great Maharaja Ranjit Singh who shines as an emperor in the entire universe.

“Maharaja Duleep Singh has an attractive, radiant face and possesses an enchanting and warm personality. Maharaja Duleep Singh possesses greatness, glory and pride with dignity.

Maharaja Duleep Singh is leader of respected and high ranking people.

Maharaja Duleep Singh is protector of his subordinates and servants.

“O Hindi (Rai Bahadur Kanheya Lal used ‘Hindi’ as his pen-name), this book of yours will be liked by all and sundry if the benign Maharaja casts his gracious look at it.”\*




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\*From the original *ARZDASHT* preserved in Archaeological Museum, Lahore fort, as reproduced in the Princess Bamba Collection; catalogue compiled by E. A. Khan (page 16-17) Deptt. of Archeology, Govt. of Pakistan.



## 6

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**MAHARANI JIND KAUR**